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ALIENS AT HOME

A Socio-Religious Analysis
of the Protestant Church in Lebanon
and its Backgrounds

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To Ingrid
my wife

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Introduction

The form of religious institutions is contingent on the place, the culture, and the history of the society in which such institutions develop. They must take seriously the already existing, accepted, and meaningful patterns and organisational structures if they are to flourish. People must be able to find in the rising religious institutions reference points to which they can relate.

Even in the cases of religions which claim revelation as their ground, careful study and analysis will readily indicate appropriated modes of expression, of meaning, and of structure which are prevalent in society. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam illustrate this fact. Each of them appropriated time-tested and time-honored modes of expression, of meaning, and of structure which were widespread in the land of their birth and development. In other words, revelation is received in a specific cultural historical context, and it is society which gives the received revelation the form which has most meaning for it. In this way new institutions become acceptable and relevant; they are enabled to strike roots, grow, and develop.

Two significant movements began in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first was born in Germany as a result of the work of Schelling, Schlegel, and Ranke; through their work the emphasis in literary criticism started to change. Literature, including the sacred scriptures, began to be viewed and studied within the cultural-historical context in which they were written. The second was born in New England as a result of the Second Great Awakening and revivalism: the Protestant missionary

movement. It was also influenced by popularised Romanticism and, negatively, by the so-called French infidelity, deism. The Protestant missionary movement was interested first and foremost with the spread of the Gospel, the Christianisation of the world, and the restoration of the apostate – all of which was to be accomplished before the setting in of the millenium.

Careful analysis characterised the German historical movement. Haste and the lack of time distinguished the Protestant missionary movement. The missionaries were not historians. They wanted results here and now, and therefore could not afford what may have seemed to them the luxury of careful study and analysis. They were revivalists whose concern, the reclamation of the world for Christ before he comes again to reign on earth for a thousand years, acquired urgent ultimacy.

Under the pressure of this concern for the imminent millenium, they were unable to discern what was culturally conditioned in their message and what was universally valid and true. After all, they were the chosen new Israel of God who considered it their manifest destiny to Christianise and civilise the world – all in the name of disinterested benevolence. Anyone who was different from them, anyone who expressed his Christian faith differently was *ipso facto* a heathen. He must discard his ways, which the missionaries regarded as millstones hung around his neck bringing him only ultimate death, and adopt theirs so that he may inherit the Kingdom of God.

Had the missionaries been historically and culturally conscious, they would have understood themselves better and would have attempted to understand the histories and the cultures of the societies to which they went. They would have sought to find out what were the meaning-systems, the values, the mores, the significant social institutions, and the patterns of organisation which gave people support, a sense of belonging, and meaning. They might then have capitalised on this background or adapted it to their purposes. But, alas, they were conscious only of their own culture and not of its conditional nature. They, therefore, proceeded to impose their ways, structures, and meaning-systems upon those whom they wanted to serve and to save.

For the Syrian-Lebanese in the first half of the nineteenth century, the family was one of the most central social institutions. It was responsible for the primary formation and information of the individual. It offered the individual support and a sense of belonging which are essential for the maintenance of human life. Again, it was the family which equipped the individual with the ways in which he could relate to others within the limits of the family and outside it; the family provided for the process of development which led to the individual's socialisation and through which he became a self in relation to others.

The structure of the family in Syria and Lebanon during the first half of the nineteenth century still resembled to a far-reaching extent that of the family in New Testament times. A careful reading of the New Testament shows that church structures were patterned after those of the family. The structure of the family both in New Testament times and in the early part of the nineteenth century in Syria and Lebanon was patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal.

When the Protestant American missionaries came to Syria and Lebanon, the family they found was still significantly unchanged in its structure. Their own family structure in New England, however, had changed due to the effects of the industrial revolution, the expanding frontiers, and the rise of rugged individualism. These same missionaries committed the error of universalising their local experience. They assumed that their ways, patterns, structures, and meaning-systems were universally valid irrespective of time, place, culture, and heritage. Thus the Protestant Church which was formed in Syria and Lebanon in the middle of the nineteenth century mirrored New England ways, patterns, structures, and meaning-systems. The Protestant Church in Syria and Lebanon became a community of aliens at home. Today still, it sings translated hymnody and worships in Victorian-Gothic church buildings whose walls are trimmed with ivy.

Consequently the Protestant Church in Syria and Lebanon is undergoing an identity crisis. The Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch says to the Protestants, 'Come home.' The Melkite Greek Catholic Church of Antioch says to the Protestants, 'Come home.'

The Maronite Church of Antioch says to the Protestants, 'Come home.'

From the Greek Orthodox, the Protestants hear the exulting statement: we are Arabs; from the Melkite Greek Catholics, they hear: we are Syrian or Lebanese Arabs; and from the Maronites, they hear: we are Lebanese. These three churches are the ground from which the Protestant Church was carved. All three affirm a heritage as ancient as Christianity itself: they all are heirs of the Patriarchate of Antioch. But whose heirs are the Protestants?

Persistently the question of identity is raised from within and outside the Protestant community. The persistence of the question points to the uncertainty and the confusion which permeate the Protestant Church in Syria and Lebanon in relation to itself as well as to the other Christian communities. Some Syrian and Lebanese Evangelicals feel compelled to ask, why this uncertainty and confusion? I shall, therefore, attempt to delineate the contributing factors.

Emile Durkheim defines religion in terms of belonging, group solidarity, and social cohesion. He understands religion as a consequence of the activity of the collective social consciousness. On the basis of Durkheim's thesis, we shall argue that the Protestant Church in Syria and Lebanon is experiencing uncertainty, confusion, and lack of integration because its forms, patterns, structures, and meaning-system were not founded in its own culture and history. Thus the quest for identity becomes a quest for cultural-historical accommodation.

Protestantism in Syria and Lebanon as we know it today is a social-religious transplant. Almost all of the members of the Protestant Church are converts, not from Islam, but from the ancient Eastern Churches. They come from a long-established rich Church heritage which grew in their own social-cultural milieu. That rich heritage had given them an adequate meaning-system which provided for the possibility of certainty, integration, and belonging.

The meaning-system – the locally developed ways, patterns, and values – of the ancient Eastern Churches, unlike the acquired

meaning-system of the Protestant Church, was and remains an integral part of Syrian-Lebanese cultural and social development. In appropriating an already formed meaning-system, the Protestants of Syria and Lebanon became uprooted and disconnected from their cultural-religious grounds; no expression of their faith could be authentically theirs for they did not participate in its creation or formation; yet, the natural processes of development required and produced the adoption of the symbols of the alien meaning-system. Consequently, the Syrian-Lebanese Protestant community, after over a century of existence, emerged as an independent entity but remains incompatible with the cultural-religious milieu.

One must admit, however, that the early Syrian-Lebanese Protestants did not feel the insecurity, the lack of integration, and the disconnection as do the present-day Protestants. The missionaries from New England had come to Syria-Lebanon with an attitude of superiority: a supposed superiority of culture, civilisation, and religion. The new converts, unlike their descendents, also began to feel superior to their compatriots and former co-religionists. As if in chorus, they joined their teachers in denouncing the 'superstitions' and the false and 'carnal' teachings of their original Churches.

However, even though they did not feel alienated from their kin, they had in fact become alienated formally; they were excommunicated from their Churches and became as strangers to their own relatives. Security and belonging, for them, were found in the 'mission compound' where a level of integration was possible between missionary and convert – albeit a meagre and perhaps superficial one.

As the role of the missionary began to wane and the Syrian-Lebanese Protestant became more prominent in the conduct of the life of the community, estrangement and alienation acquired a more vivid character. Another process was operating simultaneously: it was the rise of the spirit of nationalism which occasioned an awakening and a renaissance of the cultural heritage.

At the present time the Syrian-Lebanese Protestants are serious in their quest for identity. The external expressions of the Church as

well as its structure are alien, but the people are Syrian-Lebanese, and they are Arabs. In this lies the heart of the identity crisis. The problem which faces this Church is how to bring about compatibility between the two opposing tensions.

In this study, it is my intention to analyse some of the factors which have contributed to the current alienation. An attempt to understand both foreign and indigenous cultural, social, religious factors shall be made for the purpose of proposing ways in which compatibility with the Syrian-Lebanese culture may be attained. Once a self-understanding is reached, it is hoped that the Protestant Church in Syria and Lebanon will be able to relate to the ancient Churches in a more meaningful manner as well as to the total life of the Arab East.

Furthermore, as a result of this self-understanding, the Protestant Church in Syria and Lebanon will, it is hoped, be enabled to accommodate itself, its forms, patterns, structures, and meaning-system to the culture in which it exists. The alien forms which were inherited may then be replaced with those which are more authentically Syrian-Lebanese. At the same time, we must keep in mind the inevitability of tension between the Christian faith and local culture; for this reason, the aim should be genuine accommodation rather than thorough indigenization. Accommodation must be understood to mean this: that the Church in Syria and Lebanon must be engaged in a process by which it will determine what of its forms, patterns, structures, values, and meaning-system are of New England origin and what is the heart of the Christian gospel which must be integrated into the Syrian-Lebanese milieu. In spite of this process, tension will continue, but it will be within the proper cultural context.

In conclusion, it is hoped not only that this study will contribute to the resolution of the quest for identity among the Protestants in Syria and Lebanon, but also that it will provide a basis for the resumption of dialogue among all the Protestants of the Arab East, which is now suspended.

Chapter 1

What is religion?

The inter-relatedness of culture and religion

No religion has ever been known as an abstraction. It has always had the form which culture gives it. Culture provides not only the form of a particular religion; it provides the symbols, myths, and rituals which give religion its backbone. These symbols, myths, and rituals are the creation of man in society.

Because man is a social creature, he lives in groups and forms institutions. Institutions such as the family, church, and government act as the cement which holds society together. Upon the foundations which these institutions afford, man creates plausibility structures within which he finds a sense of belonging, creates meaning, and takes action.

Each society, therefore, develops its own norms, values, and laws. No individual contrives his own; they are a collective social product. If each individual were to live solely according to constructs of his own making, the inevitable consequence would be social disorganisation – ultimately, disintegration. Ruth Benedict is right:

No man can thoroughly participate in any culture unless he has been brought up and has lived according to its forms.¹

As Berger states, culture is dynamic and alive. It has to be repeatedly 'produced and reproduced' and it is 'predestined to change.'² But this change cannot find legitimacy unless and until

the stamp of approval is given by society collectively. Culture is the totality of what man produces in material as well as non-material terms. Man's products – his tools, laws, norms, and values, objects or non-objects – all become objectified, and through this process they begin to act in turn upon man himself. If they are tools, they may act upon him according to the logic inherent in their making, even though man did not foresee such possibilities. The same, of course, is true of the non-material sphere. The laws, norms, and values will begin to act upon man externally, with the power he originally posited in them.

Berger sees society essentially a 'part and parcel of the non-material culture.' It 'structures' the whole scope of man's relationships with his fellow man and is composed and sustained by active and 'acting human beings.' Consequently, all social constructs must be viewed as 'relative in time and space.' They are not universals with applicability to all men and all places.

Although society may be defined as one aspect of culture, this definition does not demean society since it has indeed a significantly high position among the various components of culture. Society must be understood as beliefs which are given body by means of human activity,³ whereas culture is the totality of man's productivity. Still, culture and society can be distinguished in that

'culture' puts the focus on the customs of a people; 'society' puts it in the people who are practising the customs [as well as on their structure and organization]⁴.

All the components of culture form a unity and a cluster of phenomena which are integrated. Malinowski teaches that culture is

the integral whole consisting of implements and consumer goods, of constitutional charters, for the various social groupings, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs... [Every culture is equipped with] an apparatus, partly material, partly human and partly spiritual, by which man is able to cope with the concrete problems that face him.⁵

Christopher Dawson, E. Adamson Hoebel, Joan Metge, and others concur with the understanding of culture which Malinowski and

Berger propound. Dawson, however, makes the reservation that culture should not be 'conceived as a purely man-made order'. For him, the 'social way of life is founded on a religious law of life.' Accordingly, this law 'depends on non-human powers' in whose presence man stands in 'awe, fear, and hope'.⁶

Dawson's thesis is deficient because he is unable to make a distinction between religion as a social phenomenon and revelation as a special act of God. In its cultural development, every society creates symbols, myths, and rituals which inspire hope or induce fear and awe, but these are not based on revelation. On the contrary, they are founded upon the collective social constructs of man as he seeks to bring order and meaning to his life. For instance, in his exhaustive study of primitive society, Emile Durkheim envisaged

early man... worshipping its totem, and in so doing worshipping a symbol of (himself) – hence contributing to the maintenance of (his) collective identity.⁷

This clearly religious act inspired hope in the continuance and maintenance of the collective identity as well as inducing fear and awe as the worshipper experienced anxiety and uncertainty.

But can one learn from the experience of primitive man, especially where man today has attained such a high level of modernity and sophistication? Can modern man draw conclusions relevant to his contemporary situation from such a study? Would these conclusions be meaningful even to illumine the religious experience of those who claim revelation as the ground of their religion? When Dr Samuel Johnson learned of a scholar going to a primitive people to study their religious experience, he exclaimed:

And what account of their religion can you suppose to be learnt from savages?... 'Only consider, sir, our own state. Our religion is in a book: we have an order of men whose duty it is to teach: we have one day a week set apart for it, and this in general pretty well observed; yet ask the first ten gross men you meet, and hear what they can tell of their religion.'⁸

For the man of the enlightenment, it was unimaginable that 'civilised' man could learn anything from 'primitive' man – his 'savages'! He put 'gross men' and primitives in one category and

reserved the right of teaching for the seemingly 'enlightened'.

But when man stands in the presence of the *mysterium tremendum*,⁹ it does not matter whether he is primitive or modern. His response to that presence is his religion, which is man-produced in shape and form. The universal element is the manner of the response – it is human and it is culturally conditioned.

Religion is manifest in cultural form, as Paul Tillich points out:

The form of religion is culture. This is especially obvious in the language used by religion. Every language, including that of the Bible, is the result of innumerable acts of cultural activity. All functions of man's spiritual life are based on man's power to speak vocally or from the given situation and its concrete demands. It gives him universals in whose power he can create worlds above the given world of technical civilization and spiritual content.¹⁰

Thus religion serves a crucially important social role; it allows man to be integrated into society. It does that in three specific ways:

One, through its belief system, it gives basic support to social and individual values. Two, through its ritual, it repeatedly reinforces identification with and commitment to these values. Three, through its system of eternal rewards and punishments, it helps to insure the embodiment and acting out of values in behavior.¹¹

According to Louis Shneider, 'whether the fact of association in religious context is crucial to a definition of religion as such or not', it is an essential element of the sociology of religion. It is not a matter of inclination, but 'constitutes experiential encounter with what is humanly sensed... as a response to what is thus sensed... particularly as that response involves association'.¹²

Religion, then, must be viewed as a cultural phenomenon which cannot be studied without reference to the total cultural experience of any given society. To isolate religion from the totality of man's cultural development and set it apart from and above other cultural experience, is to give that religion the *coup de grâce*. Religion is 'part and parcel' of culture, which, in its turn, represents the totality of man's creativity.

The sociology of religion

Is religion definable? However it is defined, the definition will not be wholly accurate. Religion cannot be defined in isolation for it is inextricably bound to culture. And since culture is not a unitary phenomenon exhibiting itself in the same manner for all peoples and places, a general definition is doubly difficult. One can, therefore, only attempt to delineate the sociological origins of religion and speak of it adjectivally rather than substantively.¹³

A number of sociologists follow the dictum of Max Weber that the definition of religion must be delayed till the end of a study. The researcher should not begin with a definition, they caution. Rather, his methodology should be characterised by the study of the characteristics of religion.¹⁴ Durkheim makes a similar suggestion but nevertheless proceeds to define religion in the first chapter of his study, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. According to him

it is not that we dream of arriving at once at the profound characteristics which explain religion: these can be determined only at the end of our study.¹⁵

Durkheim postulates that religion is a product of society, and therefore can only be understood within a cultural-societal frame of reference. He deals with the characteristics of religion in terms of beliefs, the sense of belonging, and actions. But in order to avoid the pitfall against which he cautions, he prefers to use the adjective 'religious'. Thus he teaches that 'one idea' which characterises all that which is religious is 'that of the supernatural.' The supernatural 'surpasses' the limitations of man's knowledge. Religion is a 'sort of speculation upon all which evades science or distinct thought in general'. The idea of mystery implicit in the 'one idea', the 'supernatural', he warns, 'is not of primitive origin'. It was not just given to man; it was man who made it.¹⁶ All religious beliefs exhibit one common characteristic, namely, the 'classification of all things' into sacred and profane. These classifications are divided into 'real and ideal' of which man thinks in terms of two opposing groups.¹⁷

Although Durkheim proceeds from a 'description of religious phenomena', clearly within the framework of the profane-sacred

dichotomy, he 'ends with a definition of the general social functionality of religion.'¹⁸ For Durkheim, religion is

a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. The second element which thus finds a place in our definition is no less essential than the first; for by showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from that of the Church, it makes it clear that religion should be an eminently collective thing.¹⁹

Max Weber proposes another view of religion. Unlike Durkheim, who insists on the objective reality standing over/against man is society, Weber maintains that religion cannot be grasped through 'the external courses of religious behavior'; on the contrary, religion can be understood from the 'viewpoint of the subjective experience, ideas, and purposes of the individuals concerned – in short, from the point of view of religious behavior's "meaning" (*Sinn*).'²⁰ The chief thrust of Weber's sociology of religion is thus upon meaning.

Weber stands in clear contrast to Durkheim in more than one way. Durkheim's starting point is empirical data from which he derives social laws and objective social facts;²¹ Weber begins with the subjective categories of meaning which have no objective being, outside of man himself. From these he proceeds to construct his ideal social types, which of course are not found in reality in pure form. Unlike Durkheim, Weber stresses that history is the material with which the sociologist must deal as he seeks to understand social institutions and organisations. Ideas are the tools for understanding; it is not objective social facts which determine meaning for him. Man derives meaning through subjective experience as well as through the methodical analysis of institutions on the basis of the ideal social types.²²

The sociological system which Weber expounds can be understood when one considers the Protestant ethic as one of the ideal types. Through the analysis of this ideal type we find that the emphasis is focused on the individual's accomplishments as an index of his belonging to the company of the elect. This work ethic makes

necessary a social organisation which is given structure through the process of intellectual rational analysis, habitual practice and classification into clear categories.²³

A third point of view is that of Thomas Luckmann. He follows Durkheim in that he asserts the external objectivity of 'moral universes'. Man is born into these moral universes which are constructed by successive generations. For Luckmann, meaning-systems are 'the result of universe constructing activities of [these] successive generations'. He emphasises the fact that 'human organisms' do not create moral universes from nothing. They are, in fact, 'born into them' and thus transcend their physical nature 'by internalizing a historically given universe of meaning.' At this point we can see a similarity with the thought of Weber. Luckmann succeeds in bringing together Durkheim's stress on external objectivity and Weber's concern with individual subjectivity.²⁴

With Luckmann we can assert that human organisms do not construct their universes of meaning. But as they internalise the symbols of the moral universes into which they are born, they confront each other; this confrontation is not between human organisms but between 'Selves'.

The human organism becomes a Self in concrete processes of socialization. These processes exhibit the formal structure previously described and mediate, empirically, a historical social order... socialization as the concrete process in which such transcendence is achieved, is fundamentally religious.²⁵

This process depends on the 'universal anthropological condition of religion', the 'individuation of consciousness and conscience,' and is realised through 'the internalization of the configuration of meaning', which presuppose a historical social order. This configuration Luckmann calls a 'world-view'.²⁶

The world-view exercises an 'external influence' on each person through a variety of social controls. It has both an objective and a subjective reality for each individual. By means of the objective reality, the individual is enabled to draw upon 'a reservoir of significance'. And through its subjective reality he is further assisted in appropriating the qualities which will socialise him and result in

the creation of the social self. We may conclude, therefore, that

the world-view, as an 'objective' and historical social reality, performs an essentially religious function, and define it as an elementary form of religion.²⁷

On the basis of the foregoing analyses, we can conclude that religion is a cultural form through which society develops certain methods of protection against the unknown or the unpredictable and which provides a means of control for man as he seeks to order his relationship to the universe. Religion provides man with an 'organized picture of the universe' and promotes an orderly relationship with the totality of his milieu.²⁸ These social functions of religion can be summarised in that they aid in

reinforcing and maintaining cultural values.... the preservation of knowledge.... [providing] a response to the need of an organized concept of the universe.... [and] a mechanism for allaying anxieties created by man's inability to predict and understand events which apparently do not conform to natural laws.²⁹

As such, then, religion is one of the cultural phenomena which man is able to produce so that he may organise himself and his relationship to his fellow man as well as his relation to the universe. In its external form, religion is clearly a social-cultural creation whose content is a world-view. It is also a response to that which man encounters in his attempt to lead an orderly life. In its internalised form, religion is that which concerns man ultimately. Ultimate concern does not have to do only with a transcendent being; it can be related to anything within man's total life meaning.³⁰

The power of the social fact in determining the form and quality of religion

The social fact is an objective reality in society. It is an external force which can exert power upon an individual and upon society as a whole. Its power is coercive in that it can shape, mould, and form man and his society. The social fact, however, is not a given in society. It is man-made and societally produced. But once

produced, it acquires an objective reality of its own as if it were a thing – an ontic reality.

The fundamental principle of the Durkheimian 'positive' method is to treat social facts as things (*choses*)... social facts are to be studied apart from the conscious subjects in whose minds they must exist. They must be considered from without (*du dehors*). The objectivity of the social facts is an objectivity shown by their persistence in consciousness; no mere willing can remove them.³¹

When Durkheim suggests that we must deal with social facts as *choses*, he does so because he wants us 'to free ourselves of prejudice'. At the same time, he wants us to beware that 'we must not rely upon ourselves' and thus inquire into our 'feelings' when we wish to establish the essence, origins, and functions of the different human institutions'.³²

What are the phenomena which may be called social? Obviously there are many things which man does and which may be considered social: eating, drinking, sleeping, and reasoning. But this is not what Emile Durkheim is concerned with when he deals with social facts. He is concerned with, for example, the fact that a believer of any religious community

finds the beliefs and the practices of his religious life readymade at birth; their existence prior to his own implies their existence outside of himself.³³

All the different forms of signs and symbols which an individual uses in the conduct of his affairs are there given and independent of him – whether he uses them or not. This is necessarily true of each and every person of any given society. Durkheim, therefore, defines social facts as

types of conduct or thought [which] not only are external to the individual but are, moreover, endowed with coercive power, by virtue of which they impose themselves upon him, independent of his will... it is an intrinsic characteristic of these facts... that [they] assert [themselves] as soon as I attempt to resist [them].³⁴

Charles Elmer Gehlke, in his interpretation of the nature of the social facts, proposes in conformity with Durkheim's thought that they have their roots in society upon whom they exercise constraint and not in the individual man.

He defines the constituent elements of social facts as

beliefs, tendencies, practices of the group taken collectively. As for the forms which the collective states take, in being refracted in the individuals, these are things of another sort.... Indeed, certain of these (sc., social) ways of acting and thinking acquire by reason of their repetition, a sort of consistency, which so to speak, precipitates them and isolates them from the particular events which reflect them. Thus they take a body, a sensible form which is their own, and constitute a reality *sui generis*, quite distinct from the individual facts which manifest this reality.... Such is the origin and the nature of the juridic and moral rules... articles of faith... codes of state.... One can define... (sc., a social fact) by the diffusion it presents in the interior of the group, provided that... it exists independent of the individual forms it takes in so diffusing.³⁵

The cause of the social fact is not the individual. Durkheim criticises Herbert Spencer, and rightly so, because he attempted to explain 'the formation of society by the demonstration of the utility of cooperation.' Were social facts like physical, material, or psychological phenomena within the power of the individual, then the principle of 'utility of cooperation' could lead to change. But by virtue of their being social facts, they 'impress themselves on the individual from without.' They can be changed only when there are forces which influence the collective social mind.³⁶

This understanding of the social fact has led to accusations against Durkheim: he undermines the role of the individual to render him a mere body, apart from the whole society. This Durkheim rejects with good reason. In a letter to the editor of the *American Journal of Sociology*, in February 1898, he says:

The intensity (of suicidal currents) cannot but depend on three sorts of causes which are as follows: 1) The nature of the individuals who compose society; 2) The manner in which they associate, that is, the nature of social organization; 3) The passing events which trouble the functioning of the collective life without altering the anatomical constitution. It is quite true that society does not understand any other moving forces except those of individuals.... Without doubt, the elementary properties through which the social fact comes about are contained [found] in 'essence in individual spirits.'³⁷

This shows in as clear a language as possible that Durkheim does not

render the individual a mere body apart from society and the collective social mind.

In response to Durkheim's letter, Gustavo Tosti notes that Durkheim did not clarify the nature of the individual's role in society even though 'the elementary properties through which the social fact comes about are contained in essence in individual spirits.' He adds that Durkheim does not distinguish between the 'element' and the 'whole' sufficiently. The 'social fact exhibits properties of its own, but what is its point of departure, if not the combination of individuals?'³⁸ In this, Tosti fails to see the difference between a mixture and a compound. In a mixture each of the constituent elements retains its own original properties, while in a compound the constituent elements interact with each other and produce a wholly different and new substance. Likewise, individuals in society are not merely added together, juxtaposed, or mixed. They form a unity, a whole, and a collective being. This collective being is the source of the social fact.

Individuals do not ordinarily choose their religious belief and practice; these are the product of 'social life, not of individual reasoning'. Durkheim held that society must not be regarded merely as a collection of individuals who agree to live together. Their religion cannot and should not be studied as a 'feature of the psychology of individuals.'

Religion then imposes itself on individuals from without, from the society in which they were brought up and in which religious beliefs and practices were taken for granted.³⁹

This argument is best illustrated by Durkheim's study of the Australian primitive society in which he demonstrated how the reverence accorded to the totem signified the 'unity of their social groups, their clans.' As a matter of fact, by considering their totems, as sacred, 'they regarded the groupings of their society as sacred'. The analyst can recognise in the tribal gods 'the order of tribal society itself'.⁴⁰

Inasmuch as religion is a cultural-societal phenomenon, it is also subject to the power of the social fact. In relation to religion, the social fact determines what is of ultimate concern for any particular society. The shape and the content of religion always reflect the

collective social mind. What is right; what is wrong; what is moral and what is immoral; what is of supreme importance and what is peripheral to the whole society are the consequences of the effect of the coercive, regulative, and normative force of the social fact or facts operative in any given society.⁴¹

Both individually and collectively, man is spurred to action by his world-view. His world-view, the backbone of his religion, is directly related to the activity of the social facts in his society or group. As Luckmann states:

The world-view stands in a dialectic relationship with the social structure. It originates in human activities that are at least partly institutionalized. It is transmitted in processes that are, again, at least partly dependent on institutions. Conversely, performances and institutions depend on the continuous internalization of a world-view.⁴²

The importance of Luckmann's thought lies in the fact that an external force, powerful as it is, acts even more powerfully when it is internalised. To be sure, the external force, the social fact, has power in and of itself in an objective manner. But when these principles are internalised, then man moves beyond the stage of being motivated, spurred, controlled, or restrained – he moves to the stages of his own formation and development.

External forces, by definition, remain external to man and act upon him as such, unless they are internalised and appropriated. Once they are appropriated, their power becomes doubly effective inasmuch as they then exert pressure on man from without and from within. A new creature is therefore born. He is one who reflects the social mind by his conduct, by his practices, by his beliefs, by his mores, and by the manner in which he expresses relationships. He is no longer only a 'human organism'. Now he is genuinely a self – a socialised self, as Gehlke explains.

Our minds, as individual members of a group of associating minds, are in constant interaction; each mind is a function of all others. There is thus a oneness in diversity. Out of this socially produced oneness... springs, in reaction to common stimulation, a like response... The content of the social mind then is that common area of all individual consciousness on which the social emphasis falls.⁴³

At the same time, one must recognise Durkheim's insistence that the cause of the social fact and the social mind is contained '*en germes dans les esprits particuliers*.' Further, it is inadequate for a number of individuals to repeat an act in order for it to become a social fact, since mere repetition does not constitute the full problem of social fact formation. An understanding of social facts can be stimulated by asking two types of questions: One: how have things come to be what they are? Two: what is their position in the social system?⁴⁴

These two questions will constitute the methodology by which social measurement will take place in our consideration of religion and religious movements. By raising these fundamental historical and sociological questions, we will come to answer how a social fact or a number of facts determines the form and the quality of a religion.

The power of interiorised principles: their rationalisation and habitual practice

Because of his creativity, man is continually pouring himself out into the world in terms of ideas and tools. It is thus that man externalises himself. However, once ideas and tools are externalised, they attain an objective reality of their own and are incorporated into the totality of what we might call objective consciousness. As such they confront man and this confrontation triggers another process – the will to re-appropriate these realities. This is the process of internalisation. Peter L. Berger shows how this works out through a dialectic formulation.

The fundamental dialectic process of society consists of three moments, or steps. These are externalization, objectivation, and internalization.... It is through externalization that society is a human product. It is through objectivation that society becomes a reality *sui generis*. It is through internalization that man is a product of society.⁴⁵

Internalisation, then, implies – insofar as it means re-appropriation – that man begins to follow the inner logic inherent in

that which he internalises. For example, language is an externalisation of man, but when the developing child begins to internalise the principles presupposed in his language, he, then, proceeds to follow the inner logic of that language. Language is a system of symbols for all that which man produces—tools, values, norms, and patterns of behaviour. Through language and the internalisation of its principles, the child forms a hierarchy of values and patterns of behaviour which guide, shape, and form his life.⁴⁶ By means of language, and due to its symbolic nature, the individual can rationalise the principles of his culture—obviously including those of a religious nature.

Rationalisation is perhaps the most predominant general category in Max Weber's philosophical analysis of history. He credits this process with the responsibility for 'the rise and fall of institutional structures, the ups and downs of classes, parties and rulers.' The import of rationalisation can be measured negatively in relation to what elements of thought are 'displaced'; and positively in relation to the 'extent to which ideas gain in systematic coherence and naturalistic consistency'. Furthermore Weber's view of 'disenchantment' comprises a philosophical factor which sees the history of man moving in 'unilinear progress toward perfection... or cumulative technological rationalization.'⁴⁷

Weber's concept of rationalisation clearly deals with religious concerns. American sociologist Talcott Parsons, points out that rationalisation is the chief way in which societies 'define their religious situation'. Weber's process of rationalisation has three sub-processes: intellectual clarification; specification; and systematisation of ideas. It helps man to understand and verbalise his motivations and conviction; specify directions and purposes; and organise his ideas intelligently and coherently. Ideas come into being as a result of what Weber termed 'the teleological meanings' of how man understands himself and his position in the ordered world. As man understands himself in this manner, he legitimises his goals and provides direction for his purposes as he relates to the organised world around him. As Weber points out:

Such ideas imply meta-physical and theological conceptions of

cosmic and moral orders, as well as man's position in relation to such wider orders.⁴⁸

In his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber intended to demonstrate how particular forms of Protestantism were in fact the source for the motivation behind economic pursuits. From its beginning Protestantism shaped a life style which had a direct effect upon economic pursuits. Mundane and worldly functions were thereby given religious significance. Weber therefore found it necessary to analyse the doctrines of the Reformation in the quest for a clearer understanding of the phenomenon at hand.⁴⁹ He says:

To discover the historical causes... it would certainly be much more convenient if we could simply deduce the emergence of particular styles of life from the abstract propositions of 'psychology.' However, historical reality cannot be pushed around.... the people of that period (the Reformation) had after all very specific ideas of what awaited them in the life after death, of the means by which they could improve their chances in this respect, and they adjusted their conduct in accordance with these ideas.⁵⁰

Weber stresses the fact that 'ethical maxims may be correlated with... dogmatic foundations.' He sees a one-to-one relationship between the ideas contained in dogma and the ethical system which guides and shapes the lives of believers in that dogma. And in order that we may understand what motivates and moves a group to action, we have to study its doctrinal and confessional statements. For it is in here that we find the world-view and the meaning-system which motivates and moves the group.⁵¹ In this we see what Weber means when he emphasises the fact that sociology of religion is predicated on the meaning embedded in the history of ideas.

We have at least two examples which illustrate Weber's thought. These are the religious activity of the ascetic and the mystic. The ascetic is always conscious of God as the one directing his life and all activities so much so that he feels he is 'the instrument of the divine will.' However, the mystic does not see himself so much as the 'instrument of the divine will,' but as the 'vessel' through which God works. Still, asceticism can take one of two forms: world-fleeing or world-embracing. Weber gives more prominence in his study to the world-embracing form of asceticism which understands the world as

God's domain, and which can sing, 'This Is My Father's World'; he therefore concludes that the rationalised dogmas of a group such as this acted as the chief motivating force for economic activity.⁵²

Weber's most comprehensive analysis deals with Calvinist Puritans. The Puritan realised his total depravity, his complete dependence on the sovereign free God and on his grace – the only factor enabling him to belong to the elect. Through the process of rationalisation and internalisation of these principles, he developed the dictum: if I am successful in the economic sphere, I must be in favour with God. To further assure himself of being in favour, he worked hard, produced, and amassed wealth 'to the glory of God.' This amassing of wealth became for him an index of his salvation and redemption – indeed, his election.⁵³ Weber gives the following reasoning for the behaviour of the Puritan type:

The world exists to serve the glorification of God and for that purpose alone. The elected Christian is in the world only to increase this glory by fulfilling His commandments to the best of his ability.... The social activity of the Christian in the world is solely activity *in majorem gloriam Dei*... labour [then], in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear[s] to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by him.⁵⁴

Weber's sociological system stresses the concept of the ideal types to illumine the understanding of social structures. The Calvinist Puritan, as an ideal type, serves our purposes here. He demonstrates the powerfulness of the rationalised principles contained in dogmas and statements of faith. As a methodology for social analysis, Weber's typology allows us the possibility of laying hold of meaningful reference points.

The crucial conclusion is this: once principles are appropriated and internalised in order to derive meaning for the individual in determining his conduct, and once the same individual rationalises them, they attain an objectivity of their own and begin to act upon him in just as coercive a manner as does the social fact. The ascetic in question, in Weber's analysis, is not a hermit, but a man in society. Here comes to full bloom the significance of Durkheim's statement that all the components of the social fact are contained '*en germe*' in the individual.

Footnotes

- 1 Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1934, p. 37.
- 2 Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory*, Doubleday, New York, 1967, p. 6.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 4 Felix M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology, the Science of Custom*, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1962, p. 30.
- 5 Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, The University of North Carolina Press, 1944, p. 36.
- 6 Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture*, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1948, p. 47 f. for concurrence with Malinowski and p. 57 for his reservation. Also Joan Metge, 'Christ and Culture,' in *South East Asia Journal of Theology*, VIII (1967), 20-21; and E. Adamson Hoebel, 'The Nature of Culture,' in *Man, Culture and Society*, ed., by Harry L. Shapiro Oxford University Press, New York 1956, pp. 168-9.
- 7 Keesing, *op. cit.*, p. 327. See also Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* New York, The Free Press, 1965, © 1915 George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 107 F.
- 8 R. Godfrey Lienhardt, 'Religion,' in Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 310.
- 9 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford University Press, London, 1946, p. 12f.
- 10 Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* Oxford University Press, New York, 1959, p. 47.
- 11 Charles Y. Glock, Religion and the Integration of Society, in *Review of Religious Research* II (1960), p. 50.
- 12 Louis Schneider, ed., *Religion, Culture, and Society: A Reader in the Sociology of Religion*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1964, p. 27.
- 13 J. Paul Williams, 'The Nature of Religion,' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, II (1962-63), 3-6 and John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (Yale University Press, 1934), pp. 3, 7, 9.

- 14 Peter L. Berger, Louis Schneider, Elizabeth K. Nottingham as well as others begin their sociological studies of religion with the warning against starting with definitive statements about religion. However, all of them seem to deal with the problem substantively without waiting until the close of their studies. Berger points out that he is not convinced by Weber's position on the proper sequence of definition and substantive research, since the latter can only proceed within a frame of reference which *defines* what is relevant and what is irrelevant in terms of the research, *Ibid.*, p. 176. On this point see Louis Shneider, *op. cit.*, p. 24f., and Elizabeth K. Nottingham, *Religion: A Sociological View*, Random House, New York, 1971, p. 6; also Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion* Beacon, Press, Boston, 1964, p. 1, who says: 'To define religion, to say what it is, is not possible at the start of a presentation such as this. Definition can be attempted, if at all, only at the conclusion of the study.'
- 15 Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 43.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- 18 Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
- 19 Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-3.
- 20 Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
- 21 Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- 22 Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii and p. 1f.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-11.
- 24 Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1967, p. 51.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3.
- 28 Ralph L. Beals and Harry Hoijer, *An Introduction to Anthropology*, Doubleday, New York, 1962, pp. 528, 558.
- 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 560-561.
- 30 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, the University of Chicago, 1951, p. 211f. Tillich, however, points out that 'ultimate concern must transcend every preliminary finite and concrete concern.' Ultimate concern, that is, cannot be confined to the realm of the finite and still retain the proper character it must have.
- 31 Charles Elmer Gehlke, *Emile Durkheim's Contributions to Sociological Theory*, Columbia University, New York, 1915, p. 133.
- 32 C. Bougle, 'Preface to the Original Edition,' in *Sociology and Philosophy* by Emile Durkheim, The Free Press, Glencoe, 1953 p. xxxvii.
- 33 Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, The Free Press, New York, © 1938, pp. 1-2.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 2. See also Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- 35 Gehlke, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- 37 Emile Durkheim, 'Letter to the Editor,' in *American Journal of Sociology*, III (1898), 848.
- 38 Gustavo Tosti, 'The Delusions of Durkheim's Sociological Objectivity,' in *American Journal of Sociology*, IV (1898), 171.
- 39 Lienhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 319.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 320.
- 41 Gehlke, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-6.
- 42 Luckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- 43 Gehlke, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- 44 J. G. Peristiany, 'Introduction,' in *Sociology and Philosophy*, by Emile Durkheim, *op. cit.*, pp. vii, xxiii.
- 45 Beger, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- 46 Luckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- 47 H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1958, p. 51.
- 48 Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, *op. cit.*, p. xxxii.
- 49 Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber and Intellectual Portrait*, Doubleday, New York, 1962, p. 57.
- 50 Max Weber, 'Kritische Bemerkungen zu den vorstehenden "Kritischen Beiträgen,"' in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*, XXV (1907), cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8.
- 51 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958, p. 97.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 111f.
- 53 *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Chapter 2

The Protestant missionary movement

The cultural-religious scene in New England at the beginning of the nineteenth century

*Der Herr hat Grosses an uns getan.
[Und] euer Gott ist ein Stein.*¹

'The Lord has done greatly unto us.' This was the self-understanding of the people in New England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Independence was won. That was the main indicator that God was on their side. He not only had helped them against their foe, but he had also provided plentifully for them. However, after the Revolutionary War there were the usual problems:

...it took the major Protestant churches until about 1800 to regroup and reorder their forces. By this time the churches had become acutely aware that the nation which had prospered in war had become, from the point of view of religious observance, slovenly in peace. [One Church] bewailed the 'general dereliction of religious principle and practice among our fellow citizens,' and the visible prevailing impiety and contempt for the laws and institutions of religion.²

The social situation in New England, then, followed the typical patterns found in the aftermaths of wars when institutions and social structures are shaken to their very foundations and an exultant citizenry ignores and neglects the patterns of life which have been set and which have prevailed prior to the war experience.

Cultural and religious leaders found a convenient scapegoat for the disrupted social order: the French Revolution. Mr Richard Birdsall suggests: 'The decrepitude of the old New England [was seen]... as nothing less than a crisis of faith and social order.'³ These leaders saw in revolution 'French atheism' the real culprit, though the situation was in reality far more complex. Birdsall suggests that the 'statements of Timothy Dwight supply an illuminating background commentary', for example, Dwight's description of 'Vermont Frontiersmen,' as quoted by Birdsall, shows 'their anti-social character':

These men cannot live in regular society. They are too idle, too talkative, too passionate, too prodigal, and too shiftless to acquire either property or character. They are impatient of the restraints of the law, religion, and morality and grumble about the taxes by which the Rulers, Ministers and Schoolmasters are supported... under the pressure of poverty, the fear of the goal, and consciousness of public contempt. They leave their native places, and betake themselves to the wilderness.⁴

The apparent exaggeration to which Dwight resorted brings out some elements of truth about New England society. At that time a high proportion of New Englanders could have been properly described as frontiersmen.⁵

Another cultural problem which New Englanders faced at the turn of the nineteenth century centred on those people who settled the West. Since they were 'far removed from the civilizing and Christianizing influence' of the established East, New Englanders were afraid the Western settlers would 'revert to "barbarism" and thus subvert the moral order of society' beyond the disruptions which had been occasioned by the influx of deism.

The influx of deism and the popularisation of deistic thought was brought about by the publication of Paine's *Age of Reason* which stresses the application of reason over revelation. This led to a heated controversy which took its sharpest form in New England. Here, the Congregational churches held sway, and identified closely with the political establishment, in that 'their clergy, Federalists almost to a man, were inclined to identify true religion with the

Standing Order.' They, therefore, formed the chief obstacle to the anti-federalist aims of the Jeffersonian party – precursors of the later Democratic party in America. In consequence

the Jeffersonians, in turn attacked this 'political Congregationalism' which seemed [to them] to bear out the... notion that the church was the mainstay of conservative and reactionary government. Disestablishment became one of the main objectives of the Jeffersonians as it was of the sects which suffered some restrictions and more humiliations under the establishment.⁷

This identification of true religion with the Standing Order acted as a social fact and, therefore, shaped the character of the leaders of the emerging Protestant missionary movement. Clifton E. Olmstead observes that

the preservation of the establishment in New England served to infect the Congregationalists of that area with an attitude of superiority and self-centered complacency.... Congregational leaders were so engrossed in the glories of New England that in their myopia they failed to see the possibility of a great nation extending to the Pacific.⁸

It can be legitimately added that this myopia was so strong that anyone who did not fit the categories of the 'superior' New Englander was characterised as 'heathen,' 'ignorant,' and 'uncivilised.' This attitude permeated the whole established church and the total social order. The missionary was the product of that church and that society. This is how he looked on these issues:

'Evangelisation' and 'civilization' had been the key words in American mission methods.... It was believed that acceptance of the gospel through 'evangelization' always brought to non-European people the desire and incentive to attain 'Christian', i.e. *European* civilization. [Rufus Anderson] had no doubt that the 'civilization' which the gospel has conferred upon our New England is the highest and the best... the world has yet seen, and given plenty of time [the] Christian faith would transform any society.⁹

A further aspect of the background against which the Protestant missionary movement must be seen, is the activity of the sea-faring New England merchants. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Boston and other sea-ports had become centres of international

commerce and, therefore, of attraction in terms of the exotic stories brought back by the merchant sailor. An admixture of truths and half-truths, as well as falsehoods created images in the minds of the hearers which stirred them deeply – both romantically and realistically.

In the early 1800s New England was seeing the fires of the Second Great Awakening catch. An obvious characteristic of revivals is the process of simplifying the options offered to man. According to American church history specialist, Sidney E. Mead

revivalistic activity demands the simplification of all problems, so that they may be presented to the prospective convert as a choice between two alternatives. This Dwight did in presenting his choice between Christianity and infidelity.¹⁰

As we saw earlier, rationalisation is the process by which the individual externalises his experience; it is the act of stating in clear-cut terminology what the individual believes to be rationally acceptable. Sidney Mead's depiction of 'revivalistic activity' demonstrates what Weber means by the process of rationalisation. The rationalised externalised principles were to exert a normative force on those won over by the revivalists from the Unitarian, deist, and Jeffersonian camps.

Two forms of normative-regulative forces were at play in the New England society where the missionary movement was born. One of the two forms was what may be described as an external force, a social fact, a central category of Emile Durkheim; while the other was the internal ideal force of Max Weber. The latter was occasioned by the rising revivalistic spirit in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Social facts which shaped the rise of the Protestant missionary movement

The study of the history of New England's cultural-religious situation reveals several significant social facts which shaped that society. These social facts are: manifest destiny – a sense of a special

calling and mission encompassing the whole spectrum of life and extending beyond continental America; individualism – the manner in which manifest destiny was to unfold; voluntary association as a mode of relation developed due to the highly individualistic society; revivalism – which fed the individualistic spirit and fired it with enthusiasm and vitality of action – this was the way through which the benefits of manifest destiny would be shared as a result of a sense of duty and obligation emanating from the concept of disinterested benevolence. It is a perfect illustration of Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic*. The consequence of all this was to be progress – progress as a step towards the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, and the Millennium.

The opportunity to begin all over again in the new land was seen as taking place under the infinite wisdom and providence of the Christian God of mercy and of judgment whose will was to be read in the events of the unfolding history itself. Thus the Americans, those new men, came to look upon themselves as a peculiar, a chosen people, set apart by God to serve a peculiar purpose in the history of mankind – a purpose that would be fully revealed in God's good time. This was their destiny which to be known had to be lived out.¹¹

Ralph Waldo Emerson had said, 'Europe extends to the Alleghenies [Appalachians] while America lies beyond.'¹² The chosen few who had settled the Eastern colonies had to move westward to help unfold the manifest destiny assigned by God. The future of Christian civilisation was contingent on the success of this westward march. In the plains, west of the Alleghenies, the 'new American' was born; he was totally new and 'unfettered' by the cultural patterns of his ancestry. 'The American character produced there furnished the model for the whole nation west of the Alleghenies.'¹³

Religious, political, and economic factors were at play in the determination of New England attitudes toward the rest of the North American continent. Lyman Beecher had recognised the important role the West was to play in the shaping of the future of America. He said:

The West is a young empire of mind, power, and wealth, and free institutions, rushing up to a giant manhood with a rapidity and a

power never witnessed below the sun. And if she carries with her the elements of her preservation, the experiment will be glorious.¹⁴

The movement westward as an expression of manifest destiny, namely, the conquest of the wilderness and its subjugation, found theological warrant.

The theological basis for this feeling of destiny was the common doctrine of providence.¹⁵

It was grounded in the sense of a special election and calling through which God was to be glorified. Protestant theologians and clergy alike saw an 'inseparable connection between America's privileged place in history and national responsibility.' And as James H. Smylie so aptly puts it:

Their minds were stretched by 'extended views' of empire and the role the United States as God's 'American Israel'... [was to play]. America's privilege was conditioned by God's universal promise for man. The clergy saw God as the active agent of history and America as God's eighteenth-century Israel, an empire-servant to bless all mankind.¹⁶

Politically and economically, as distinguished from the theological expression, manifest destiny is also known by the term 'American continentalism' – at least as it relates to the American continent. Once the whole North American continent was a unity, one nation, then it would become the 'empire-servant to bless all mankind.'

America's self-image as an empire-servant was an invitation to continental imperialism, accumulation and manipulation of power often sanctified by the most specious of reasons behind a mask of innocence... the success of the national enterprise, due largely to the abundance of place which made a 'people of plenty,' has been interpreted as a merit badge of virtue.¹⁷

The annexation of the West is of interest to us inasmuch as it relates to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. This Board was engaged in mission among the Indians and its missionaries joined the inevitable westward march.

American destiny clearly pointed to the West. There stretched a whole continent, tenanted by uncounted hordes of pagan aborigines whose salvation lay heavily on the evangelical

conscience. To look east and outward to more ancient heathen civilizations for benevolent expansion ran counter to the strongest currents in the New World.¹⁸

However, what Clifton Jackson Phillips seems to overlook when he considers the difficulty of instituting a 'benevolent expansion' eastward or, for that matter westward, is the economic and political motivation which was not so benevolent, but grounded in self-interested business programmes. When Asa Whitney returned from China after having succeeded in business, he campaigned in 1845 for the building of the Pacific railroad. He stressed that by building the railroad to the West, America would

revolutionize the entire commerce of the world; placing us directly in the center of all... all must be tributary to us, and in a moral point of view, it will be the means of civilizing and christianizing all mankind.¹⁹

Mission and commerce joined together in their march both in a westward and eastward direction across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. And due to the exertions of both the missionary and the merchant, Boston became a household word in faraway places such as Smyrna, Canton, Honolulu, and Bombay.²⁰

However, missionaries not only did the right thing for the wrong reasons, but also the wrong thing for the right reasons. James A. Scherer points out three types of distortions in purpose which were taking place in the missionary enterprise. These comprised the political, the cultural, and ecclesiastical areas. The political motivation tended to displace the 'apostolic'; the extension of the *corpus christianum* took precedence over the extension of the Gospel.

Missionaries function alongside military and political administrators as agents of both the church and state. Coercion [not through collectively developed social facts] may be used to enforce political and religious uniformity, the medieval social ideal.²¹

The nineteenth century as the century of Protestant mission exhibited more than any other previous period 'the cultural displacement of the apostolic missionary' motive. No other people were as burdened as the nineteenth century New Englanders with the sense of a special mission and calling – a manifest destiny. Missions were therefore considered to be

an ideal means for expressing the obligation of Christians to share their culture and religious blessings with the less fortunate.... [The missionary's] aim [was] to reproduce Christendom among the heathen.²²

In this attitude one can detect a cultural aggression of a very subtle kind. This form of cultural aggression began at home and was carried beyond the horizons to other continents and cultures. For example, the American Indian was to be made an Englishman through language, and a civilised person instead of a savage aborigine through Christianisation. Non-evangelical Christians outside America's boundaries were considered equally pagan, heathen, and uncivilised.

The aroma of Christ was strangely contaminated with the odor selfinterest. The preaching of "Christ crucified" was often of reduced to the offer of material inducements and the promise of social advancement.²³

In Palestine, the Protestants were given the name 'the schilling sect', and converts in China 'rice Christians'.

Sin no longer was a meaningful category; backwardness had replaced it. And grace was replaced by progress as well as modernity. To allow for the possibility of civilising and modernising forces to change the patterns of life, and to give these new patterns some kind of permanence, ecclesiastical forms which were developed in the West and which were culturally conditioned were transplanted in their entirety without any regard for the culture onto which the transplant was being made.²⁴

Protestant Puritanism and pietism were chiefly responsible for the highly individualistic society which developed in New England and along the frontiers. Individualism can also be traced to the understanding which 'gave God his glory, man his place, events their meaning – and England its due.'²⁵ And when the nation became independent, it laid the foundations for a democracy wherein the will of the individual, his rights, privileges, and responsibilities were both safeguarded and stressed. This emphasis on democracy was paralleled by an equally marked emphasis on individual freedom. 'Each pioneer was practically a law unto himself... managing his own affairs in any way he chose.'²⁶ The

small population, in the land of plenty, together with the stress on individual freedoms and rights, allowed for the possibility of unchecked rugged individualism.

The social, economic, and political situation set the scene for individualism as an external force, a social fact; while revivalism fired it with personal enthusiasm in terms of the individual's own salvation. Religion became a personal matter; it involved the individual alone in a special relationship with God. Revivalism also served as a deterrent force against deism or "the French infidelity" which was seen as a genuine source for the corruption of true religion. The function of the revivalist was the forestalling of such an eventuality.

Dwight was a man with a mission. He traced... religious deadness and... political ills... to the infiltration of French infidelity... his real argument against infidelity was not theological or metaphysical... but moral... he pictured in vivid terms the inevitable tendency of infidelity to destroy the basis of true religion, to undermine good morals, and to do away with sound government. With equal vehemence he asserted the tendency of Christianity to undergird all three.²⁷

The Revolutionary War had disrupted the 'normal patterns of church life' and the spread of rationalism, especially in its militant deistic form acted negatively upon the churches. As Dwight attacked vehemently these disruptive forces, another force had begun to unleash itself. This was popularised romanticism which enhanced the possibility of an Awakening and a revivalistic spirit.

The new revivals took place in a cultural atmosphere in which the influence of romanticism was strongly felt... [the romanticism] generally pervasive in early nineteenth century American life was a 'folk' or 'popular' romanticism, which with its emphasis on feeling and intuition was congenial to revivalism.²⁸

The fight against rationalism, deism, and Jeffersonian democratic thought acted as an external force upon New England churchmen; and the spread of popularised romanticism with its 'emphasis on feeling and intuition' acted as an internal force upon the same churchmen. This brought about the eruption of the Second Great Awakening. This eruption was to become significant in relation to missions when

the alliance between Old Calvinist and Edwardean had been fully worked out [and thus] the awakening spirit became more widespread in Congregationalism. Internally related to this development was a new upsurge of missionary interest.²⁹

The new upsurge in missionary interest can be accounted for when the Edwardean elements, as developed by Samuel Hopkins and his pupil Jonathan Edwards the younger, are brought into focus. These elements were: the concept of 'disinterested benevolence,' 'millenarian expectancy'—and therefore the sense of urgency to act before the onset of the millennium. A third element was that internal feeling of superiority among New England Congregationalists and other Calvinists where the terms Christian and evangelical were construed as synonymous and exclusive of any other. They further equated 'non-evangelical' with 'heathen'. This naturally led to a strong anti-Roman Catholic and anti-traditional-Church attitudes among the rising missionary task forces. Anti-Catholicism in the United States was not rooted only religiously, but also politically. Catholics were opting for Jeffersonian democracy and disestablishment—an attitude which was not appreciated by the 'Standing Order' Congregationalists and Presbyterians. These negative attitudes toward Catholicism and traditional-Church later manifested themselves in the encounter of American Protestant missionaries with such churches as they embarked on the task of mission in the early nineteenth century. They were the bearers of 'true' Christianity and of 'civilisation' to the 'un-Christian' and 'uncivilised' world.³⁰

The general evangelical outlook neglected culture or historical differences among the various component parts of heathendom and tended to include all unevangelical people in a single appraisal.³¹

The Edwardean contribution to the alliance was the new spirit which permeated the ongoing revivals; while the Old Calvinists who were influenced by the revivals provided the framework within which the new spirit was able to operate.

An analysis of the elements of the new spirit shows how these elements acted upon New England society as social facts as well as internal forces with power to shape and form styles of life and action.

The first of these elements, namely general 'disinterested benevolence' constituted true virtue for Jonathan Edwards. This theory acted significantly upon the theological, ethical, and social developments in New England.

It was no accident that classed Samuel Hopkins... or Jonathan Edwards the younger... among the earliest opponents of negro slavery, or drew the earliest missionaries of the American Board from Edwardean ranks.³²

Disinterested benevolence acted upon New England as a social fact when it was externalised, objectified, and appropriated. It meant, according to Hopkins and his followers, 'love... universal disinterested good will'. Its nature was further spelled out to mean 'the greatest good in the universe'. Again it was stressed that the 'opposite of holiness [and disinterested benevolence] is any form of self-love which puts self before the good of the whole.' The implications of disinterested benevolence went as far as suggesting that the individual ought to be willing to be damned if that meant the good of the whole.³³

As these ideas became the conviction of these newly awakened from 'slovenly peace', they acted upon the individual members of that society as external social forces. They, therefore, acted as coercive, regulative, and normative forces; and anyone who put his welfare and good before that of the whole – even the whole world – placed himself under the severe judgment of society.

However, this phenomenon can also be looked at from Weber's point of view. That is, in terms of rationalisation which by definition means the simplification of the options offered to the prospective convert. Hopkins reduced 'righteousness' and 'evil' to single principles. He was convinced that the 'universe moves toward a single goal' which was the widest possible good of the whole of mankind. He attacked accepted truths and challenged their *raison d'être*. He did not shrink from the logical consequences of these premises.³⁴

As the believer toward the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, internalised the simplified principles enunciated by Hopkins and his disciples – the leaders of

the Second Great Awakening – the normative force of these rationalised, simplified, and internalised principles took its natural course in the shaping of patterns of behaviour. It seems that New Englanders were the battleground of this inner force in individual lives as well as the external force being exerted upon them by the total society.

The theory of disinterested benevolence served to shape the lives of New Englanders in both the Durkheimian and Weberian senses of social fact and rationalisation respectively. It was

Hopkinsianism [which] presented a view of the religious life which called for an instant and unreserved consecration to the service of God.³⁵

Such consecration manifested itself in at least two patterns of behaviour: first, in terms of missionary activity at home and abroad; and, second, in terms of social reform. The doctrine of disinterested benevolence was of 'particular interest because of its strong missionary and social implications'. This driving capacity of "disinterested benevolence" was illustrated by Hopkins himself in the leadership he gave to anti-slavery and reforming efforts. It was also seen in the lives of the revivalists who were committed to the doctrine and who placed their influence and support behind the burgeoning voluntary missionary and reform societies in the early part of the nineteenth century.³⁶

The second significant doctrinal element was the firm belief in the rapidly approaching millennium. This belief became widespread among all who experienced the spirit of revivals in New England. It became the responsibility of the Christian, therefore, not only to proclaim the gospel to all men, but to 'recognize human society in accordance with the law of God'; to make things right before the setting in of the millennium.³⁷

Christianity and society were seen by some marching together 'onward and upward' in the direction of the 'grand consummation of a prophecy in a civilized, an enlightened and sanctified world.'³⁸ Again a unity of Christianity and civilisation – the particular civilisation of New Englanders – is emphasised. The onward and upward march of Christianity and civilisation in New England was

conceived of as the microcosmic pattern the whole 'heathen' world must follow – or else their doom would be sure.

The belief in the dawning millenium directly affected the activity and the intensity with which foreign missions to the 'heathen' was conducted.³⁹ In the report of Samuel Worcester, the first Secretary of the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, we read of the 'goodness of God' who

animated [the churches] to continued and increased efforts for communicating his saving health to millions ready to perish... Far off in the Western Ocean; yet not beyond the reach of Christian beneficence – we shew a Nation of Islanders – a civilised and Christianised, a wealthy and virtuous and happy people. From these we go to the far distant East, and point to millions and millions of human beings in the lowest state of debasement... [we must] prepare the way of the Lord, *who will ere long appear in his glory*.⁴⁰

The distinguishing mark of the times was that 'all is progress' in the words of *The Independent* in 1851. In their opinion the time had come when the founding of that 'spiritual kingdom which God ordained' was to take place.⁴¹

In viewing the coming of the millennium in these terms, those who were awakened spiritually were spurred to action – urgent action – because the time they had available to them to accomplish their missionary task was getting shorter and shorter. This sense of urgency engendered by millenarian thought, combined with sense of duty, gave the missionary movement its impetus. Thus

it was not romance,... nor was it primarily the spirit of adventure that impelled them to leave their friends and kindred.... Their idea of duty was the real impelling force.⁴²

In this we are able to read more clearly the meaning of Weber's *Protestant Ethic*.

Again the activity of the external force as well as that of the internal force and its inner pressure can be seen at work in this understanding of revivalistic evangelicalism. The strength of the impulse, therefore, was doubly strong. This is why in a relatively short period of time the American Board of Commissioners for

Foreign Missions sent more than a hundred missionaries around the world; but it had not forgotten its duty to those 'heathen' in the backyard – the American Indians. It is well nigh impossible to understand "the urgency behind the drive to convert the world in a single generation without pondering the note of chiliastic expectancy."⁴³

The third element which was also present in Hopkinsian revivalistic thought and which served as a social fact as well as an internalised idea, was anti-Catholicism. Anti-Catholicism can be widened to include any Church of the traditional heritage. This element was directly linked to millenarian thought. The revivalist-influenced missionaries considered it their duty to transform the traditional religious forms before the onset of the millennium. This was evident in

the belief that the years were hastening on toward the millennium [which] directly affected foreign missions. Before the last trumpet should sound, Israel must be restored from her apostasy and nations converted to Christ.⁴⁴

Millenarian thought closely linked the renewal or restoration of Israel to the collapse of Islam and the Vatican. Islam was identified with the biblical epithet 'false prophet' and the Vatican with the 'anti-Christ'. Many a Congregational minister sounded the alarm in sermons. The millennium appeared to them to be around the corner. Disinterested benevolence prompted disinterested affections toward all men, whether 'civilised' or 'uncivilised'; Jew or Muslim; Catholic or heathen. It was the missionaries' duty to civilise, christianise, and evangelise before the end, and the inevitable destruction of all non-evangelicals.

The missionary purpose

The Great Revival which swept America at the beginning of the nineteenth century triggered the missionary movement in 1810. As far as the American Protestant missionary contributions in Lebanon were concerned, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was the controlling organisation. The charter, which had

given its legal existence, specified in rather vague terminology the goals to be achieved. It declared that the purpose of mission was the propagation of the Gospel in heathen lands and among the nations and communities which were not yet evangelised. This wide blanket provided for the possibility of an interpretation of the set purpose to include Jews, Muslims, and nominal Christians.

In 1818 the American Board decided to send missionaries to the Near East:

Resolved that the Rev. Messrs. Levi Parsons and Pliny Fisk be designated for Jerusalem and such other parts of Western Asia as shall be judged eligible, that they be sent out as soon as be found convenient and that in the meantime, they be engaged for the Board at home.⁴⁶

These two missionaries were kept in the United States for one year touring and interpreting the necessity of having a mission to Jerusalem.

As Arthur J. Brown points out, 'it was natural that the missionary thoughts of American Christians should turn toward Syria.' Its relationship to many of the biblical accounts and history and the facts that it had been under Muslim domination for over three centuries and that Christian remnants had survived, but had degenerated into tribal clans hardly more than nominal Christians, merged to form a strong appeal to American Christians.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the idea of missionary work addressed to Syria and the Holy Lands was of peculiar significance to those who held revivalist millenarian convictions.

Fisk and Parsons left for the field a year later, stopped in Malta, received from William Jowett a 'Paper of Hints' and continued on their way to Smyrna which was the flourishing trade centre of that period.⁴⁸ They came not only ignorant of the language of the area and of the culture, but also of the Churches of the East with whom they thought they could cooperate in bringing the Gospel to the Jews and the Muslims.

Smyrna was the orientation centre; the missionaries could learn from the experience of the merchants who were already there. They were to learn the languages of the people and get acclimatised to the

cultural milieu. So in Smyrna Fisk and Parsons occupied themselves with language study in preparation for their task in Jerusalem. However, as the second holy city of Islam, Jerusalem was closed to foreigners or 'Franks'; the Ottoman Empire had prohibited the proclamation of the Gospel to the Muslims, so work among them was illegal and hazardous. The Ottoman authorities did not look favourably upon work among the Jews either since it might disrupt the existing social structures.

The Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions did not entertain any illusions about the ease of work in Jerusalem. It recognised the many difficulties which were ahead of its missionaries. Thus a methodology was needed so that friction would be minimal. The instructions given to the missionaries were specific and clear. They were to be prudent and wise in their dealings with the local people; to be able to relate to the Eastern Churches without causing offence; to do their work without breaking the conventions of the area; and to teach in private and distribute tracts of the scriptures.⁴⁹ Even though Fisk and Parsons had only been in Smyrna for a short time – an inadequate period for a thorough orientation or sufficient language study – they received communication from Boston that they must proceed to Jerusalem. They, however, had a better understanding of the situation and realised from their contacts with the British missionaries that Jerusalem as a mission station was not a possibility; yet even a missionary could visit Jerusalem on religious festivals. Parsons decided to go to Jerusalem. Eastern ecclesiastics received him cordially, particularly the Orthodox Procopius.⁵⁰

While Parsons was in Jerusalem, he distributed Bible tracts. The first encounter with Eastern Christianity was very pleasant, and Church leaders in Jerusalem expressed their desire that Parsons should come back. Parsons' record points to the success of his visit to Jerusalem:

As it respects gaining and imparting information, this is indeed the centre of the world. The station must not be relinquished. The door is already open. Difficulties must be expected, but the good resulting from a mission established here will be an infinite reward.⁵¹

Despite the fact that the leaders of the Eastern Churches had received the missionaries in a very brotherly manner, the missionaries did not have one good word to say about their hosts. An example of the lack of candor which led to trouble eventually can be found in the relation which Pliny Fisk had with his Arabic language instructor in Beirut who was a Catholic priest. Fisk had not told the priest that he was a clergyman. This priest entered one day into the room of Fisk and saw a letter addressed to him as: The Rev. Pliny Fisk. An interesting dialogue followed, from which it can be seen that the Catholic priest's attitude toward Fisk did not change with the discovery that Fisk was a Protestant. On the contrary, the priest now addressed Fisk as brother.

Men of the same order must address each other accordingly. We are ministers, and I accordingly address you as brother.⁵²

Yet in the same report Fisk speaks of his teacher in a very uncomplimentary manner. He describes him as irresponsible, superstitious, having to believe the teachings of his church without personal responsibility for faith. In this, Fisk seems to lack any understanding of the Church as community.

The attitude of superiority toward the Eastern Churches coupled with the distribution of Bible tracts as the grounds for challenging the beliefs of these churches soon became the chief point of contention and conflict. Native church leaders, after facing the relentless attacks of the Protestant missionaries, warned their followers that they should not be misled by the 'biblicists', the 'ingliz', and the 'heretics'. It was in 1824 that Fisk and Isaac Bird, who had joined the mission after Parsons' death, were arrested in Jerusalem for disturbing the peace by distributing Bible tracts. Interestingly, however, the charge which was brought against them was not related to their activity, but rather to their having worn a white turban! Upon intercession on their behalf by the British consul, they were released. Later the same year, a *firman* was issued by the Sultan

at papal instigation, strictly forbidding the distribution of the Scriptures, and commanding all who had received copies to deliver them up to the public authorities to be burned.⁵³

The one missionary whose actions and polemical writings contributed to the intensification of the friction between local churches and the missionaries was Jonas King. King was an orientalist; he had studied Arabic in Paris under the famous De Sacy.⁵⁴ A Jesuit priest invited King to become a Roman Catholic. King's response to this invitation was the writing of a paper comprising thirteen objections which prevented him from becoming a Catholic. He wrote the paper in Arabic. A young Lebanese Maronite, Assaad Shidyak edited the Arabic. Shidyak was inspired to write a reply to King's paper, but he was so influenced by the paper he wanted to refute, that he was converted to the evangelical faith.⁵⁵

Open conflict erupted between the missionaries and the Maronite Church as a result of Shidyak's conversion. He was a graduate of 'Ayn-Waraqah School which trained Maronite students for the priesthood. Eventually Shidyak was arrested by the men of the Patriarch of the Maronite Church. Although, he managed to escape, he was recaptured and imprisoned in a cell in the monastery at Qannoubin. Isaac Bird gives a very detailed descriptive account of the imprisonment and subsequent sufferings of Assaad Shidyak and his death. Shidyak was declared as Protestantism's first martyr in Syria.⁵⁶

The conflict with the Maronite Church as well as with the Orthodox Church could have been avoided had the missionaries had the openness and the brotherly attitude towards the Eastern Churches as did the leaders – at least initially – of these Churches have towards them. Instead of soliciting the assistance of the existing Churches, they elicited their anger. The purpose with which the missionaries had come was, thus, thwarted by the missionaries themselves. As a result, the Eastern Churches were not purified, nor the Muslims converted, nor the Jews restored from their apostasy.

Although the early records do not specifically indicate that mission was directed toward the Muslims, it can, however, be inferred from later accounts.

The original aim of Protestant missions in Asiatic Turkey was not

to found a separate church but to purify the nominal Christian sects. This was believed to be the first step toward the conversion of the Muslim world.⁵⁷

Two successive steps in the strategy of the missionaries are here spelled out. First, the purification of the nominal Christian sects: as we have seen it not only failed to purify the Christian 'sects' of the East, rather, it alienated them. This alienation provoked *firman*s from the Sultan prohibiting some of the activities in which the Protestant missionaries were engaged. It also necessitated the forming of a separate church – which was not the original intent. Second, as a first step towards the conversion of the Muslim world, this strategy failed, caused pain, as well as strife in the beleaguered churches of the East.

The fact that the missionaries were unable to accomplish their declared objectives is related to the condition of the Eastern Churches. That those whom the Protestant missionaries assumed could be of help to them in the proclamation of the Gospel to the Muslims were themselves in need of conversion and purification from error was more than they were able to tolerate! Probably their disappointment can be related to their lack of understanding of the Eastern Churches and what they had endured during more than three centuries of Ottoman rule and suppression. The missionaries' inability to appreciate any other culture besides their own compounded the problem.⁵⁸

Their strategy was a failure. They were unable to work with the Eastern Churches as partners in mission to the Muslim world. Their witness was a broken presentation in a society which had grown suspicious of an innovative movement; their work in the midst of a Muslim system which did not look kindly on anyone who might disrupt the seemingly well-operating social structures, contributed to the failure of the mission by the standards it had set for itself.

Practically all the converts to the evangelical faith were carved from the membership of the Eastern Churches. This intensified the suspicion and distrust with which Eastern Church leaders viewed the Protestant missionaries. Jean Michel Hornus sums up the situation:

It was from these Eastern Churches that almost all the Eastern Protestants were to be wrested, so that the great mission aimed at the conversion of non-Christians was not only diverted from its objective, but it even contributed to the still further weakening of the ancient churches which it had first wished to support.⁵⁹

The enthusiasm which characterised the spirit of the missionary movement at its outset did not allow for the slow process of working with the Eastern Churches as their associates and helpers. Rather, the spirit demanded results in view of the impending millennium. The correspondence between the missionaries and Rufus Anderson, the secretary of the Board, speaks of the Syrian field in hopeless terms since results were not achieved. There was a consideration to close down the whole operation. But the work which was started in education began to show some results; the Board, therefore, decided to continue.⁶⁰

Missionary attitudes of superiority, *hauteur*, lack of trust, and the pressure of time, all part of the New England echos, contributed to schisms in the Eastern Churches. The spirit of enmity began to pervade the whole spectrum of relationships. Anathemas were pronounced by Maronite and Orthodox Patriarchs against the missionaries and those of their own who followed them. Bishops warned their people against any dealings with the Protestants under the penalty of excommunication.⁶¹

Those who were converted to the evangelical faith such as Assaad Shidyak, the martyr of Lebanon; his brother Faris; Butros al-Bustani, Michael Meshaka were graduates of Maronite schools. In other words, the first local leadership was already educated by the Eastern Churches and their well-established schools.

Positive contributions through education

Now that the break with the Eastern Churches had taken place and that there were some converts, it became necessary to organise a native Protestant Church and to establish schools basically designed for the training of leaders for the newly formed church, but which could also be utilised as a means of evangelism and an agent of

civilising the heathen as well as the nominal Christians. The first church was organised in Beirut. Others followed.

The founding of a local Protestant Church was not the original aim of the missionaries. However, the turn of events made it a necessity. Those who had accepted the evangelical faith were persecuted by their church hierarchies and the very powerful Maronite Patriarch. Thus it was logical for those who were turned out by their own churches to group together and seek to organise themselves into a church in accordance with the evangelical faith.⁶²

Rufus Anderson had advocated the creation of native evangelical churches to carry on missionary work. In his belief such local churches could be more effective due to their mastery of the language than could the missionaries. His suggestion was put into practice in the latter part of the 1840s when two important events took place. The first was the organisation of the National Evangelical Church in 1848. Evangelical converts gathered in 'Abeih under the leadership of Butrus al-Bustani, formulated rules and regulations for the Evangelical Church in Beirut, and requested the mission to recognise their congregation as a duly organised church.⁶³

The new church originated in the best manner. At the annual meeting of the mission, a petition was presented from the native Protestants at Beirut to the American missionaries, asking that they might be organised into a church, according to certain principles and rules embodied in their petition. The whole idea originated with the native brethren.⁶⁴

The second event of significance was the beginning of the translation of the Bible into Arabic – a Protestant edition. Up to this time the Protestant missionaries had been using the Catholic translation of the Bible, copies of which they had bought in Rome and reprinted. The use of the Catholic edition of the Arabic Bible had occasioned many problems since the Protestants' reprints did not include the Apocrypha.⁶⁵

After a number of years of preparatory study, the Mission embarked on the translation of the Bible into Arabic. Their aim was to produce a text which was not only stylistically satisfactory, but

also faithful in its rendering of the original texts. They, therefore, appointed Eli Smith and Butrus al-Bustani to undertake the task of translation. They also appointed Sheikh Nassif al-Yaziji to supervise the Arabic linguistic and stylistic features of the work. Bustani would translate from Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek; Yaziji would check and smooth the Arabic; and Smith would revise the copy seeking to insure faithfulness to the original texts. After the death of Smith in 1856, Cornelius Van Dyck replaced him. At the same time they added to the staff Sheikh Youssif al-Assir, a Muslim graduate of Al-Azhar to further check the Arabic. By 1864 the whole Bible had been translated.⁶⁶

The native Protestant Church was established and the Bible translated into Arabic, but a major necessary factor for the continuance of the new church was still missing – local pastors. Eli Smith had been appointed pastor of the National Evangelical Church in Beirut. But those native candidates suitable for the pastorate were very few. Among those few was Butrus al-Bustani who was not interested in ordination. Yet he preached and led services in the early period more than any other native Protestant. During this time Smith had been urging Bustani to study theology; Bustani did so and the congregation took the initiative and proposed that he be ordained. The church's request was, however, denied by the Mission. This negative response created tensions which the Mission could have done without.⁶⁷

The new Evangelicals were educated in Maronite schools and other Eastern Church-related institutions. When the question of local pastors arose, the concurrent question was how to educate native men for the ministry. It became a necessity to found schools for the training of ministers. The missionaries believed that the educational task should go beyond the training and preparation of ministers. Anderson was not keen on the question of general education in secular terms. He wished, rather, that any educational activity should be used as a tool for evangelism, and that schools which were supported by church funds must be used for the production of 'preachers and teachers in the mission, not spreading general secular education.'⁶⁸

In compliance with the wishes of the Board, the Mission began early in its history to found the church and school combinations. The church depended for its membership on those who were evangelically influenced through the schools. Since the people were usually employed by the Mission, material inducement and social advancement served as very strong motivating forces.

Two institutions of learning stand out among the many which the Mission founded. They were the 'Abeih Seminary for boys which was established in 1846 by Cornelius Van Dyck, and the De Forest family boarding school for girls in Beirut.

The 'Abeih Seminary passed under the care of Rev. Simeon Calhoun, in 1849, and continued to flourish as the highest literary institution in Syria, until the Syrian Protestant College was opened in 1865 [*sic.*].⁶⁹

Uppermost in the plan for the "Abeih Seminary was the imparting of maximum religious and moral instruction and the insistence on the uplifting of the students' character. No student was to be received in the Seminary unless he had become an Evangelical. Naturally, the purpose of the institution was the training of possible future native pastors.⁷⁰

The education of women which was begun by the Protestant missionaries in Syria has been one of their chief positive contributions. Jessup reports that in 1850 there were 1300 women

who are church members in the bounds of the Syria Mission, and the girls of all sects are being taught in all the cities and many villages of Syria.⁷¹

With the opening of these schools between 1830 and 1850 the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics opened their own schools as a response to Protestant educational activity. In fact, Protestant educational involvements set off, as it were, a chain reaction in the Eastern Churches and particularly the Jesuit order. This turned out to be for the general good of Lebanon as it promoted education on a wider scale; though there was an element of rivalry:

The American Mission did not always consider native non-Protestant schools as rivals of its own. But all schools directly or indirectly connected with Catholic missions were considered as rival institutions.⁷²

The Mission was also involved in higher education, though the Malta College was a short-lived experience in this respect. It was founded for the purpose of providing education for the peoples of those lands bordering the Mediterranean. The intent was that its students would be as near their homes as possible so that they would remain in as near a cultural setting as their own. Furthermore, those who went to Europe either remained there or when they came back they were not very useful inasmuch as they had themselves been changed and no longer fitted well within their own cultures. In his *Reminiscences* Bliss gives a clear account of the Malta College:

The object of this college is to educate young men for teachers, preachers, Bible readers, etc. Many of the scholars receive their education free of expense. But all such pupils must be natives of some of the countries around the Mediterranean and must come well recommended and must agree to settle in their native country or in the East, as preachers, school masters or religious leaders of some kind. The Malta College was supported financially by funds from England but other resources were available. Its pupils came from nearly all the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean. Costs were very high and it was difficult for the college to continue.⁷³

With the closing of the Malta College coupled with the problems arising from the restriction of instruction in Mission schools to the Arabic language, many of the students found their way to institutions administered by Jesuits. Their parents desired that they should receive a more advanced education and acquire skills in foreign languages which would better equip them for gainful employment. Besides, the Mission schools and seminaries concentrated on the preparation of preachers and teachers who would assist in the expanding work of the missionaries.

The exclusion of the English language from the 'Abeih Seminary in Lebanon, and the girls boarding school of Beirut, and confining all instruction to the vernacular Arabic, had begun as early as 1858 to lead prominent families to withdraw their children from the American schools and send them to the French Lazarists and Jesuits.⁷⁴

The demand for general education was increasing and the provisions for such education by the 'Abeih Seminary was decreasing. This situation prompted the missionaries to consider the

possibility of accommodating the needs of the country. It was obvious that funds received for missionary work could not be used for the purposes of higher education; yet the need to provide higher education, the inability of existing Protestant institutions to meet such needs, and the withdrawal of pupils from Protestant schools were all pressures upon the Mission to develop new forms of education. Attention, therefore, was turned toward the founding of an institution of higher learning which could satisfy the demand for general higher education as well as the better equipment of church workers.

After considerable discussion of the educational needs of the country, the Mission decided on 27, January 1862, to appeal formally to the American Board for 'authority to establish such a school' of higher learning with Daniel Bliss as its principal.⁷⁵ The American Board gave the request serious consideration. It agreed to the plan if a number of conditions were observed. These were:

That it was most important that the establishment of the College should not jeopardize the training of a Christian ministry, a work which was as yet by no means accomplished; that as, owing to the demand of the country, the creation of a higher institution was inevitable, it was essential that the first of the kind should be established by Protestants, not by Jesuits; that the pupils should be educated with reference to the business which they might propose to follow, as ministers of the Gospel, lawyers, physicians, engineers, secretaries, interpreters, merchants, clerks, etc., thus avoiding the reproach of sending forth helpless and useless drones upon society.⁷⁶

Almost five years passed before the Syrian Protestant College opened its doors. Daniel Bliss left for the United States to raise the needed funds and to seek a charter from the Board of Regents of the State of New York. A bill to incorporate the Syrian Protestant College and Robert College was duly signed by Governor Seymour on 14 May, 1864.⁷⁷ Despite the fact that the College was not directly under the jurisdiction of the Mission or the American Board, it nevertheless served the purposes set forth by the Mission in terms of leadership development.⁷⁸

In this manner an institution which had far reaching effects on the

Arab world came into being. And when an audit of the contribution of this institution is taken, of the dynamism it put into learning, and of the accomplishments of its alumni, it may rightly be said that its influence on the Arab world and Arab renaissance was superior to the contributions of any other institution. These contributions have been in the fields of education, politics, economics, and medicine. The involvement of the American missionaries in education had, to say the least, one particularly prominent merit:

'they gave the pride of place to Arabic, and once they had committed themselves to teaching it, put their shoulders with vigour to the task of providing an adequate literature.'

To this pioneering activity, the first signs of new life in Arab revival owe most.⁷⁹

The founding of the Syrian Protestant College led indirectly to the founding of St Joseph University. As the Protestants did not want their students to leave them for lack of an institution of higher learning, neither did the Catholics. Therefore, the founding of the college prompted the creation of another. This competition between Protestants and Catholics, though undesirable in itself, promoted the spread of education to the benefit of the Lebanese and the neighbouring countries.

When Father Xavier Gautrelet became *superieur* of the Jesuit mission in 1864, he determined to move the school at Ghazir to Beirut for the purpose of counterbalancing the American Protestant influence.⁸⁰ But it was only in 1875 that the St. Joseph University was founded in Beirut as a Catholic response to what was construed as a Protestant challenge.⁸¹

The establishment of the Syrian Protestant College provoked action from other quarters as well. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch invited a Parisian to teach French and an Irishman to teach English. He set them up in a 'large edifice' which he built in Musseitbeh, Beirut. 'The Patriarch did not know that his school was what we [the missionaries] rejoiced in.' As the missionaries saw it, the Syrian Protestant College would soon 'compel all Syria to be educated.'⁸²

Clearly the educational institutions founded by the Protestant Mission served as a stimulus for furthering education, as well as

westernisation, in the land. And in this manner Lebanon became the scene of confrontation between two different educational systems which contributed to the cultural, intellectual, as well as political renaissance.

The positive contribution of education must be viewed as a by-product of the process which was intent on evangelising, christianising, and civilising. Educational institutions in the nineteenth century in Lebanon were means and not ends in themselves. The fact that these institutions of higher learning contributed positively does not change the reality that the early missionaries were insufficiently sensitive to the culture in which they operated. Furthermore,

the forces that gave rise to the foreign missionary movement in America helped shape and determine the purposes of the schools in the Levant since these institutions were... organised by foreign mission agencies.⁸³

Thus, despite the positive contribution through education, the missionaries remained captive to the maxim: *Der Herr hat Grosses an uns getan. [Und] euer Gott ist ein Stein.*

Footnotes

- 1 Fritz Blanke, 'Evangelische Missionskritik im 19. Jahrhundert,' *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, LXXII (1961), 89, 92.
- 2 Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America*, Scribner's Sons, New York, 1965, p. 131.
- 3 Richard D. Birdsall, 'The Second Great Awakening and the New England Social Order,' *Church History*, XXXIX (1970), 345-346.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 346.
- 5 It is interesting that President John F. Kennedy, a New Englander, characterised his administration as the *New Frontier*.
- 6 Hudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133.
- 7 Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment*, Harper & Row, New York, 1963, pp. 51-52.
- 8 Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States*, Prentice-Hall, 1964, p. 242.
- 9 R. Pierce Beaver, ed., *To Advance the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Rufus Anderson*, William B. Eerdmans, Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1967, p. 13.
- 10 Sidney E. Mead, 'Lyman Beecher and Connecticut Orthodoxy's Campaign Against the Unitarians, 1819-1826,' *Church History*, IX (1940), 221-222.
- 11 Mead, *The Lively Experiment*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
- 12 William Warren Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America*, Scribner's Sons, New York, 1949, p. 91.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 14 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 98. See also Niebuhr and Heimert, *op. cit.*, p. 32, who point out the understanding that it was the manifest destiny of the United States 'to occupy the North American continent.'
- 15 John Edwin Smylie, *op. cit.*, 297.
- 16 James H. Smylie, 'Protestant Clergymen and American Destiny, Promise and Judgment, 1781-1800,' *Harvard Theological Review*, LVI (1963), 218-219.

- 17 *Ibid.*, 231.
- 18 Clifton Jackson Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half Century of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810-1860*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, p. 20.
- 19 Charles Vevier, 'American Continentalism: An Idea of Expansion, 1845-1910,' *American Historical Review*, LXV (1960), p. 326-327.
- 20 Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- 21 James H. Scherer, *Missionary, Go Home*, Prentice-Hall, 1964, p. 27.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 35 and *The Missionary Herald*, L (1848), p. 266-70.
- 25 Robert T. Handy, *Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities*, Oxford University Press, New York, (1971), as cited on p. 7.
- 26 John D. Hicks, *The Federal Union: A History of the United States to 1865*. The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1937, p. 69.
- 27 Mead, *op. cit.*, 221.
- 28 H. S. Smith, R. T. Handy and L. A. Loetscher, *American Christianity*, Vol. I, Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960, p. 519.
- 29 Smith, Handy and Loetscher, *op. cit.*, p. 522.
- 30 Early Protestant missionaries to the Near East intended to cooperate with the existing ancient churches by first revitalising them and then attempting to launch a joint assault on Islam and Judaism. But the attitudes of superiority under which they were and by which they were enslaved did not permit them to see anything valid in these churches. That those whom they thought could be of assistance to them in the proclamation of the Gospel of the Muslims were themselves in need of conversion and purification and error was more than they were able to tolerate! A typical expression of their attitude is found in Henry Harris Jessup's statement: 'No wonder that Mohammedans and Jews look with horror and loathing upon such a travesty of Christianity. No wonder that Greek Christians in Russia and Turkey, with the open Bible before them, have made haste to come out and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. Can orthodox creed and historic antiquity justify such a glaring crime against God as this shameless idolatry (the veneration of icons)?' Henry Harris Jessup, *The Greek Church and Protestant Missions; or Missions to the Oriental Churches*, The American Press, Beirut, 1891, p. 20.
- 31 Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 270. Phillips rightly stresses the error of early Protestant missions in "neglecting the cultural and historical differences" among different peoples, but yet falls prey, to the same error in his elucidations upon 'heathendom'!

- 32 Williston Walker, *Ten New England Leaders*, Archon Books reprint, New York, 1969, p. 256.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 345.
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 353-354. Weber, it will be recalled, spoke of the fact that ideas are generated by man's teleological understanding of himself.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 354.
- 36 Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, *op. cit.*, p. 540.
- 37 Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, Abingdon Press, New York, 1957, p. 225.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 226.
- 39 Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- 40 *The Missionary Herald*, XVII (1821), pp. 9-10, underlining mine.
- 41 Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 226.
- 42 Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 45 A. L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901*, Oxford University Press, London, 1966, p. 6.
- 46 Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 47 Arthur J. Brown, *One Hundred Years*, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, 1936, p. 969.
- 48 William Jowett was of the Church Missionary Society which rendered service to the American missionaries. The revolutionary war had given the American States political independence, but did not sever the cultural ties with England. Thus, we see the American missionaries turning to the English for the guidance needed in their new task; the English had preceded them to the area and, therefore, had more experience. The first task of the English missionaries stationed in Malta was to research the society and culture of the Eastern Mediterranean lands. 'You ask advice. Had I any to send, you should have it and welcome. Missionaries, when they go forth, have two things to learn, languages and facts. The fruit will appear after many days. In the mean while, fear not but that you are serving God, and earning the confidence of your friends in America and in the Mediterranean.' *The Missionary Herald*, XVII (1821), p. 77. Languages they learned; facts apparently they did not; and the trust of the Mediterranean peoples they did not earn.
- 49 Tibawi, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- 50 *The Missionary Herald*, XVIII (1822), p. 5, tells who Procopius was in an editorial note: 'Procopius takes charge of the sale and distribution of the Scriptures. As he is also an assistant of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and

- himself president of all the Greek monasteries, it is a particularly auspicious circumstance, that he is heartily engaged in the Bible cause.' Also Tibawi, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- 51 Cited in Tibawi, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 52 *The Missionary Herald*, XIX (1823), p. 175f.
- 53 Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty Three Years in Syria*, Vol. I, Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, 1910, p. 36.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 55 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
- 56 Isaac Bird, *Martyr of Lebanon*, Congregational Publishing Society, Boston, 1864, p. 180f.
- 57 Arthur J. Brown, *Report of a Visitation to the Syria Mission of the Board of Foreign Missions*, The Board of Foreign Missions, New York, 1902, p. 23.
- 58 *Infra*, p. 13, n. 30.
- 59 A. J. Arberry, ed., *Religion in the Middle East*, Vol. I (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 537. In his essay on the Reformed and Lutheran Churches in the Near East Jean Michel Hornus differs with most available accounts on the original purpose of the Protestant missionary movement in the East. The declared aim of the missionaries as can be found in their own wording is the declaration of the Gospel message and its propagation among the heathen and the not yet evangelised. Hornus says that the 'interest shown in the Middle East by Protestantism was not originally nor solely a missionary interest aiming at the conversion of Muslims and Jews, but a theological and polemical interest which sought to base the standard of criticism applied to the Western Church on a better knowledge of the Church in the East. It may be said that this theological propensity dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whereas the missionary trend took the lead in the nineteenth century.'
- 60 Jessup, *Fifty Three Years*, *op. cit.*, p. 282.
- 61 Asad J. Rustum, *Kanizat Madinat Allah Antakia al-'Ozma* [*The Church of the City of God, Antioch the Great*], Dar Al-Funun Press, n.d., Beirut, pp. 186-196.
- 62 Howard Bliss, ed., *Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss*, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, 1902, pp. 102-103.
- 63 Tibawi, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
- 64 Rufus Anderson, *History of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Oriental Churches*, Vol. I, Congregational Publishing Society, Boston, 1872, p. 369.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 120-121.
- 66 George H. Scherer, *Mediterranean Missions, 1808-1870*, Bible Lands Union for Christian Education, n.d. Beirut, p. 29.

- 67 Tibawi, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132. A note of bitterness is expressed by Butrus al-Bustani in a letter to Eli Smith: 'Please do not rely upon us (any more) for preaching on Sundays in Kafar Shima and Beirut, and also absolve us from all responsibility for the supervision of the pulpit in these two places, first because our promise to help was restricted to summer and second because we have (other) business.... If you have the time and inclination, we should be much obliged if you would inform us, in clear language and with details, of the reasons for your negative reply to the (native) church, and of the defects (*mawani'*) which you have found in us... You are no doubt aware that this important matter would lead to many consequences... and it had an adverse influence on our feelings. Since we know that the mission must have good reasons for its refusal and no harm can come from making them public, I hope you would explain them to me.' (p. 132).
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- 69 Jessup, *Fifty Three Years*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
- 70 Tibawi, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- 71 Jessup, *Fifty Three Years*, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
- 72 Tibawi, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
- 73 Bliss, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.
- 74 Jessup, *Fifty Three Years*, *op. cit.*, p. 298.
- 75 George H. Scherer, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- 76 Bliss, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-168.
- 77 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- 78 Stephen B. L. Penrose, Jr., *That They May Have Life*, American University, Beirut, 1970, pp. 10-11.
- 79 George Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, Librairie du Liban, [reprint], Beirut, 1969, p. 43.
- 80 Frank L. White, *Religious Education in the Senior High Schools of the Presbyterian Mission in Syria*, Columbia University, unpublished Ed. D. Dissertation, 1942, p. 43.
- 81 Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 43. 'But he repeats in his letters and reports, the place of the institution is in Beirut where the Protestant Americans come to construct a vast establishment of instruction with a school of Medicine, a school of Protestant Theology, etc. It is necessary to counterbalance the influence of the American Protestant University, but, how can we go about it? We lack the resources, and we do not see from what direction it could come.'
- 82 Jessup, *Fifty Three Years*, *op. cit.*, p. 305.
- 83 Rao H. Lindsay, *Nineteenth Century American Schools in the Levant*, University of Michigan Comparative Education Dissertation Series, Number 5, 1965, p. 10.

Chapter 3

A socio-religious analysis of Lebanon at the beginning of the nineteenth century

The cultural-religious scene in Lebanon at the beginning of the nineteenth century

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had become decadent and corrupt. Culture, education, and religion had become stagnated in all the regions and the Levant was no exception. The various *walis* who ruled the different areas had become despotic and governed according to whim. The process of decay and fragmentation continued well into the nineteenth century.

G.C. Anawati proposes two main reasons for this disintegration:

One was internal, arising from the archaic theocratic conception of the state, which attempted to apply in full the principles of the Qur'an to a society exposed to the influence of modern progress. The other, external reason, resulted from the infiltration of the ideals of the French Revolution.... Subject peoples, and especially Christian peoples, longed to gain their autonomy and tried to shake themselves free of the Ottoman yoke.¹

Historians are agreed that the lot of the Christians under the Ottomans was very difficult. The causes of the difficulty are twofold: first, the stringent rules of Islam regarding *ahl adhimma* (those in the protection of Islam), tolerated the Christians, only provided that they

are not allowed to ride horses, mules, or valuable asses; may not frequent public streets, nor linger in groups to talk with one another; nor have any servants following them in the bazaars; nor speak loudly. Their houses may not be high (at any rate not higher than those of the Muhammadans), nor airy, nor decorated; their clothes must be of plain dark material and their turbans may not be white.²

And, second, the unenlightened whims of the rulers of the various districts of the empire. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Lebanon was under the rule of the Pasha of Acre, Al-Jazzar, the Butcher.³

Aziz Atiyah is right in his assessment of the impact of Ottoman rule on the differing peoples in the Empire; it 'ushered in a period of darkness for the most of the subjugated provinces.'⁴ The very existence of the Christian communities was the result of Muslim 'sufferance'. And the price they paid for their continued existence was the 'deformation of character.'⁵ This was the fortune of all Christians within the Ottoman Empire and the Lebanese Christians were not exempt.

Over three hundred years of subjugation were sufficient to induce an attitude of inferiority. This internalised attitude of inferiority assumed the role of a social fact as the whole minority Christian community externalised it. It continued, therefore, to act upon them in a coercive manner moulding and shaping their pattern of behaviour.

The beginnings of change, however, started to appear around the turn of the century. Prince Bashir the Great, of Lebanon gained firmer control over his realm after the death of Al-Jazzar, the dictator of Acre, in 1804. Local government in the reign of Bashir hastened the pace of the changes which took place in the nineteenth century. Bashir was a man endowed with the skills of intrigue practised in the Ottoman Empire. He was an astute politician who played his role shrewdly.

In keeping with his character, he allied himself with the *wali* of Sidon against that of Damascus. Bashir and his ally administered a "humiliating defeat" on the *wali* of Damascus. This prompted the Porte to act forcefully against him, and he was exiled to Egypt⁶

where he manipulated events to his own advantage.

Muhammad 'Ali of Egypt received Bashir very warmly; to him 'no other guest could be dearer.' Bashir capitalised on this warm reception and friendship. Through the good offices of Muhammad 'Ali with the Porte, Bashir was reinstated in his realm with more power than he had ever had before.

Subsequent events, not directly related to Bashir or Lebanon, led to the speeding up of tempo of change, economic, and educational change. Muhammad 'Ali had designs for the creation of an Arab empire through which he would restore the glorious Arab past and establish himself as the caliph of Islam and found a new dynasty. His Egyptian army was superior to that of the Turks, and when the Greeks revolted against the Ottomans, the Sultan sought Muhammad 'Ali's aid. The joint Turko-Egyptian armies succeeded in quelling the revolt and occupied the better part of Greece. But British and Russian intervention put an end to that occupation when they destroyed the Turkish and Egyptian fleets at Navarino in 1827.

In spite of this defeat, Muhammad 'Ali wanted the Sultan to confer on him title to Syria as recompense for the assistance he had given him against the Greeks. The Sultan refused, but Muhammad 'Ali would not be deterred. He, therefore, proceeded to take it and dispatched his son Ibrahim at the head of an army to invade Syria.

The last ten years of Bashir's reign brought Lebanon into the world arena – a position from which it has never receded – involved it in world politics, and for a third of a century placed it in the very forefront. All this began with Ibrahim Pasha's invasion of Syria; Bashir threw in his lot with Ibrahim Pasha and his assistance made Ibrahim's task easier.

Ibrahim in a surprisingly short time captured Damascus, routed the Ottoman army at Hims, crossed the Taurus, struck into the very heart of the land of the Turks and came near administering the death blow to the entire empire.... The governorship of all Syria was offered to Bashir, but he declined.

France had encouraged Ibrahim in this 'daring enterprise,' but he was forced to pull out by England, Austria, and Russia in 1840.⁷

Ibrahim Pasha introduced far-reaching reforms in Syria which affected the freedoms of the Christians in general and which facilitated the task of the missionaries in particular. Among the reforms which he introduced were the following: Christians were allowed to wear white turbans, ride their horses in public, and hold high-ranking government positions. Christians in Damascus started to have religious processions.

Ibrahim Pasha followed his father's example in encouraging education with a military and technical intention. While government elementary and secondary schools were opened for Muslims in the principal towns, he provided for the Christian majority in the Lebanon, a community outstanding in the Middle East for its combination of intelligence with application and adaptability, by encouraging the establishment of foreign missions.⁸

Were it not for the reforms introduced by Ibrahim – not only in the realm of personal freedoms hitherto not enjoyed by Christians – but also in the sphere of education, foreign missions could not have made the inroads they did into the structures of the Syrian society. In other words, Ibrahim's policy of reform set in sufficient changes to allow foreign missions a genuine chance.

They flocked to Bairut [*sic.*] and thence radiated to the rest of Syria. The year 1834 appears to date a turning point. The Jesuits had returned, the small American contingent was swelled by fresh arrivals, and a competition began between Catholic and Presbyterian, which attaining at times the asperity of a duel, caused them to vie with each other for influence and supremacy; and, in so striving, to set in train a revival of the Arabic language and with it, a movement of ideas which, in a short lifetime, was to leap from literature to politics.⁹

Ibrahim set the stage for the positive influences which were made by the foreign missionaries. The educational reforms and the creation of the schools, patterned after those in Egypt, were fostered by him so that he would have a better trained army from among the Syrians. But the Syrians and Lebanese did not take to conscription readily, and in order to avoid conscription by Ibrahim, religious groups – both Muslim and Christian – began to establish their own schools.

Schools existed in Syria prior to Ibrahim's invasion. They were related to the various religious communities in the country. Their chief function was the education of the clergy. Most of these schools belonged to the Maronites. This was so, thanks to some of the Maronite priests who had studied in Rome and had come back to found schools patterned after those of Europe. Further, the Jesuits were responsible for many of the schools of the Maronite Church.

The contacts of the Jesuits with Syria had begun early in the seventeenth century through a group of priests who were well received by some of the landlords of Kisrawan. One Jesuit father who was in a shipwreck in 1656 near Juniyah was taken for a corsair. He was brought to a feudal lord of the Khazin family who, upon recognising him as a Jesuit, bestowed on him a sizeable piece of land at 'Ayn-Turah. There the Jesuits built a home and a church. It was in this location that Butrus Mubarak of Ghusta has founded a school in 1734 endowed by the Jesuits. Mubarak himself was a Jesuit who had studied in Rome where he joined the Society of Jesus. Another secondary school was established in 1789 at 'Ayn-Waraqah.

The Jesuits had also established schools in Zghorta and Ghazir. The latter was moved in the late nineteenth century to Beirut to become the St. Joseph University. The two schools at 'Ayn-Turah and 'Ayn-Waraqah were destined to be of great importance in the educational, intellectual, and national awakening which began around the middle of the nineteenth century. Men such as Nassif al-Yaziji and Butrus al-Bustani graduated from the school at 'Ayn-Waraqah.

Both Ibrahim Pasha and the Jesuits were responsible to a large measure for the awakening which took place. But neither of these two had national and intellectual awakening as their goal. They did, however, set in motion the machinery which led to national and educational movements. From then on education began to spread and progress was promoted. Er-Rifai suggests three main reasons for this progress in the sphere of education: first, the Egyptian administration and its programme which required the establishment of government schools; second, the French and American

missionary groups; and, third, local religious leaders whose instincts to self-preservation were awakened as a result of the work of foreign missionaries, as well as the Muslim religious leaders who appreciated the progressive movements taking place in Europe.¹⁰

The events of 1834 in terms of Ibrahim's reforms, the return of the Jesuits, and the swelling of the American missionary group were the decisive factors which contributed to the spread of education and the enlightenment of the Syrian people.

The college at 'Ayn-Turah played a significant role in the formation of the writers and thinkers. Similarly, the educational system set up by Ibrahim Pasha was able to create a strong national awakening in national education particularly among the Muslims.¹¹

As a result education in Lebanon took a prominent position and continues in the same prominence to this day.

Social facts which shaped religious life in Lebanon at the beginning of the nineteenth century

The most forceful social determinant in Lebanon at the beginning of the nineteenth century was religion.¹² It was inherited religious affiliation which acted as a social fact. Because of his religious affiliation, the individual found himself at a specific social level, imprisoned in it, unable to change his social position without risking his very life. Personal as well as collective rights, privileges and freedoms were predetermined by the family's religion.

Such a condition was not necessarily altogether negative. It had its positive and valuable side. Religious affiliation, therefore, gave the individual a sense of belonging. In his community he found support, inasmuch as his meaning system was that of the society as a whole.

Religion for the Lebanese in the period of our concern determined his relation to the 'sacred world' and the 'profane world.' His relation to God and his relation to the secular world – to

other groups as well as to the state – were formed, shaped, and moulded by this inherited religious belief. And the grounds of his religious belief were found in the community into which he was born. If he was a Muslim, he had a preferred social status to the Christian in the Ottoman Empire. If he was a Christian, by definition he was subservient to the Muslim. The Christian suffered the consequences which all minorities have to suffer.

The non-Muslim had certain legal disabilities; what was more important, the majority tended to develop the arbitrary ways of unchallenged power, and the minorities the vices of servitude.¹³

William Yale commits a serious error when he says 'Ottoman exploitation was irrespective of race, religion, or nationality.'¹⁴ Were this truly the case, the Sultan would not have issued in 1865 the Hatti Himayoon¹⁵ which guaranteed equality between Muslim and Christian. Obviously, any poor could be exploited irrespective of race, religion, or nationality, but when the legal status is one of subservience because of religion, exploitation is made easier. The exploited in such a situation has no recourse or appeal to the law to defend himself. Even with the Hatti Himayoon it was not possible to eradicate the problems issuing from the inequality which was practised for a very long time.

It is no use assuring them [i.e. the Christians] that the Porte is anxious to battle with the religious prejudices and time-honoured convictions of its Mohammadan subjects... and that it earnestly wishes to carry out administrative reforms based on the principles of an enlightened religious toleration. [The Christians] know but too well that such assurances are mere moonshine.¹⁶

Religion was indeed a very important social determinant in Lebanon and throughout the whole domain of the Ottoman Empire. It influenced all areas of life – the economic, social, political, as well as the cultural spheres.

Other winds were stirring early in the nineteenth century: it was the great age of Romanticism. The merchants and the intellectuals had come in contact with these ideas. There arose in Lebanon, and especially among the Christian communities, a yearning for independence and a spirit of nationalism.

In the nineteenth century, the European idea of nationalism began to spread, partly through schools, books, and travel, and partly through the example of successful European nationalism.¹⁷

European influences began to affect the Ottoman Empire, particularly in Lebanon, as early as the seventeenth century. But these influences did not reach a wide area of the empire since these had come through Christian missionaries and most of the empire was Muslim. Thus the great majority of the population was unaffected. However, as Europe itself experienced new freedoms after the rise of Romanticism, and as contact with the Levant increased through trade and Christian missions,

it was... Syria and Lebanon, with their ancient and deeply rooted, and unwaveringly Christian communities, that were to lay the foundations of the movement that in our day is called Arab nationalism.

Two fundamental reasons account for the phenomenon which made the Syrian and Lebanese Christians the natural progenitors of the rising nationalist movement. For one thing, their proximity to Europe, 'the seedbed of nationalism,' gave them an advantage over other Arabic-speaking peoples. And for another, nationalism provided them the means of breaking the stranglehold of second-class citizenship imposed by the Ottoman state.¹⁸

The Christian community appropriated what it had learned from its European and American contacts. The process, however, did not stop there: after they had interiorised the revolutionary principles, they rationalised and externalised them – any action against the ruler meant taking one's life in his hands. As these principles became externalised, they also were objectified – and as we saw earlier objectified principles assume the character of the coercive social fact and act upon the *whole* society.¹⁹

Through this contact, the structure of society in Mount Lebanon had incorporated into its feudal system strong democratic elements.²⁰ This mountain society came to long for independence, and it is no wonder that its Christian majority assumed a leading role in the rising nationalist movement. This was due to the similarity

between the plausibility structures of the European and Lebanese Christians.

But the Lebanese mountain was not troubled only by oppression; he was also poor. With the return of the Jesuits and the reinforcement of the American Protestant missionary contingent in the late 1830's, new possibilities for shaking off the yoke of poverty emerged. Education was to play an important role in achieving release from poverty. The educated were enabled to secure better paying jobs and improve themselves economically.

The mountain society saw in this situation characterised by poverty and oppression, salvation through education. Economic progress and development formed a very potent driving force. Parents sent their children to schools administered by nationals, Jesuits, and American Protestants. They left no avenue untapped especially if it afforded the possibility of progress. Naturally the Protestant converts sent their children to Protestants schools. But when the missionaries stopped teaching English in the 1840's, the Protestants withdrew their children, and sent them to the Jesuit schools which taught a foreign language, French. In order to develop economically, the Lebanese realised that they must acquire skills in foreign languages and business methods.

The curriculum of their schools was conditioned by this aim [the dissemination of religious truths], so much so that they had to exclude English... schools controlled by Jesuits,... by English and other Protestant missions... even those under native management, offered in addition to Arabic one or two foreign languages, book-keeping, and other subjects especially suited to the growing commercial importance of Beirut and its hinterland.²¹

The Protestant missionaries were not insensitive to what was happening. They were losing some of the children of their converts. Missionaries in Beirut wrote in 1854

We see no evidence that [the] demand for schools is based on merely political considerations, as was the case several years since. We think there is a more just appreciation of the benefits of education than formerly. At the same time we cannot say that religious considerations have any considerable influence in the movement.²²

The assessment is accurate. It was not religious considerations which led to the demand for more and better schools. It was economic necessity. The proud Lebanese Christian had seen the effect of education among the European and American Christians with whom he had come in contact. Some of these were missionaries, but others were the business people. He, too, wanted to improve his economic situation. Education and the acquisition of business skills and methods became a primary concern for him.²³ He had assimilated many of the values of the better educated Europeans and Americans and, therefore, desired the same for himself.

The Eastern Churches in Lebanon in the early nineteenth century

The Church had existed in Lebanon and the rest of the Near East from the beginning of Christian history. Very early in the history of the Church controversies left an indelible mark on the unity of the Christian people in that part of the world. Divisions continued not only through the nineteenth century, but past it even to our day. To these division were added the Protestants as a result of the efforts of the American missionaries who were related to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

In this study we shall not deal with all the near eastern Churches – that will take us beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, we shall restrict ourselves to the attempt to understand the three major Eastern Churches in Lebanon. They are the Maronite, the Greek Catholic and the Greek Orthodox Churches. It was from these three churches that the Lebanese Protestant Church was carved. Of course, there are some Protestants who come from other backgrounds, but they are a very small minority and consequently it is not possible to consider all of them here.²⁴

The Maronite Church owes its name to St. Maron, 'an ascetic monk' who lived late in the fourth century and died early in the fifth. Not very much is known about him; what we know of him is limited to his biographer, Theodoret, bishop of Cyr.²⁵

Theologically the Maronites were and remain Chalcedonians. They are the only Eastern Church related to Rome which has no Orthodox counterpart. The Antiochian patriarchate, with a Maronite at its head, was formed when the see of Antioch was vacant after the death of Anastasius the II, the last Chalcedonian patriarch to reside in Antioch, and the subsequent appointment of 'titular patriarchs' by Constantinople.

With the Antiochene see vacant, the Maronite monks realised the need for a leader and elected a bishop from their monastery to fill the vacant see. The election was... canonical; had it not been so, the Holy See would have condemned it as it did in the case of Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople in 649. All available documents indicate that the Maronite patriarchs held the title of Antioch.²⁶

Historically the Maronites were the strongest defenders of Chalcedon. However, as Hitti points out, 'al-Mas'udi, the Arab historian and traveller of Baghdad, states that the [Maronites] were Monothelites.' This doctrine asserted the one will (and two natures) of Christ as opposed to the one nature espoused by the Monophysites who were Syrians and to whom the Maronites are most closely related. This was construed as a 'compromise' between Monophysitism and the Orthodox Chalcedonian creed.²⁷

Most Catholic sources deny the charge of Monothelitism levelled against the Maronites. If Catholic sources accept any relationship between the Maronites and the Monothelite controversy, they point out that it was done in innocence, without realising the full implications of the doctrine of the one will.

The position of the Maronites on the question of the two wills in Christ is best understood against the background of the circumstances in Syria at that time. On the eve of the Arab invasion, the Byzantine emperors were attempting to unify their subjects by offering a compromise acceptable to both Chalcedonians and Monophysites, founded in the duality of nature in Christ and the oneness of will.... [When the Maronites speak] of one will in Christ, they mean one practical will which is equivalent to action.²⁸

Historical records clear the Maronites of the Monothelite charge, especially when we accept the idea that their involvement in

it was based on the 'one practical will which is equivalent to action.' Therefore, we can say that they were in communion with Rome from the very earliest of their organised existence. The relationship with Rome was not cemented until the time of the Crusades. When the Crusaders marched through Syria and Lebanon *en route* to Palestine, they found in the Maronites natural allies.

The crusaders made possible the first [formal] contact of the Maronites as an independent Church with the Holy See. The last communication had been the reply of Pope Hormisdas to the Maronite monks in 518.²⁹

G. C. Anawati points out that formal relations with Rome were 'established... at the earliest possible date.' Patriarch Jeremy II al-'Amshiti was a participant in the Twelfth Ecumenical Council, Lateran IV in 1215. He was confirmed by Innocent III (Bull, *Quia, divinae sapientiae* of 4 January 1216). Relations with Rome began with this confirmation and continued uninterrupted hereafter.³⁰

However, by the time the American Protestant missionaries had come to Lebanon, the Maronite Church was clearly united with Rome as a result of the efforts of the Jesuits. The union was sealed at the Luwayzah synod in 1736. The Maronite Church had also been under Ottoman domination for more than three hundred years beginning with the foundation of the empire and its spread to Syria and Lebanon.

Self-preservation was a dominant force in the conduct and life of the Maronites during the Ottoman Muslim rule. They definitely maintained and held tenaciously to their orthodox creeds; they did not deviate from the historic positions of the Catholic Church; but they became very ingrown and the clergy were all important. The laity was left behind and many superstitions, therefore, entered into the daily life and practice of individual members of that Church.

Along with the missionaries themselves American travellers concerned with the question of mission saw a very decadent and corrupt Christian existence. They felt that such a state of affairs could not be redeemed by any appeal to orthodox creed or historical consistency. One such writer describes what she saw:

then there are Christians of many sorts; and all so unlike anything

the biographers of Christ could have conceived of, that, but for the lights of history, it would be a wonder how they ever came by the name. Besides the ordinary Greek and Latin Christians, Armenians and Nestorians, there are the Maronites; a curious kind of Christians, who at one and the same time, practice monachism [sic.] to an extraordinary extent, and preserve the old oriental Law of Revenge. They read the Psalter, and two or three puzzling books on Divinity, – Thomas Aquinas being their favorite author... [they] present as barbarous a phase of Christianity as can anywhere be found.³¹

Arthur Brown's description of the Maronites depicts the rampant attitude of the American Protestant missionaries toward the Maronites. He continues to say that 'these sects were sectarian in the narrowest sense,' and inasmuch as they

called themselves Christians, and as their Christianity was a tribal symbol rather than a vital faith, they associated the name Christian in the Mohammadan mind with inferiority, truculence and mendacity.³²

The missionaries felt, therefore, that they could not even utilise the name Christian for it was associated with such disgraceful categories, though 'there were individual exceptions,' as Brown benevolently and condescendingly points out.

The two other churches under discussion are the Greek Catholic and the Greek Orthodox Churches. From the early centuries of church history these two had formed one church. They remained one church and one patriarchate until early in the eighteenth century. Together they had formed the one patriarchate of Antioch of the Melkites, a title which was given them in derision as the followers of the *malak*, the king. It was bestowed on them by the monophysites because they had the Chalcedonian position and were in conformity with the will of the emperor of Byzantium.

Rome, in the Twelfth Ecumenical Council, had asserted that she was the mother of all the faithful; that Constantinople was the first among the patriarchates; that Alexandria was the second; that Antioch was the third; and that Jerusalem was the fourth. And since the heads of these churches had received from the Pope the *pallium* after they had made their professions to him, their bishops were also to receive the same.

Inasmuch as Rome believed that she was the mother of all the faithful, she did not spare any means to bring all Christians under her jurisdiction. The Crusaders, among the other major tasks they had embarked upon, were to get in touch with the Eastern Churches which had not made their profession to Rome and seek to get it. They met with some success, but did not do as well as Rome had expected.

Early in the sixteenth century the Jesuits had arrived in Lebanon and began their missionary work in an attempt to bring all the Eastern Churches into the Roman fold.³³ Rome sought in every way possible the means to bring to its allegiance all the Christians in the East.

The first formal attempt which Rome had made to win over the Melkite Church and bring it to a state of union took place between the years 1583 and 1587 when Pope Gregory XII had the titular bishop of Sidon, Leonard Abila go to the East in an attempt to convert the old patriarch, Michael VII. By then Michael was retired and lived in Aleppo, Syria. Abila's activities produced a small nucleus of Catholics in Aleppo, and with the influx of the Capuchins, Jesuits, and Carmelites in the seventeenth century, the number of converts to the Catholic faith increased. This increase prompted Rome to appoint a special administrator to look after their interests. The metropolitan archbishop of Tyre and Sidon, Euthymus Sayfi, was chosen for this task. Bishop Sayfi had been a student of the Jesuits and was converted to the Catholic faith in 1684. He proceeded to found the Salvatorian Monastery in Joon, east of Sidon.

The Melkite patriarchate of Antioch was not party to the East-West division. We have seen, however, how gradually that patriarchate became involved in the Catholic-Orthodox controversy, and how some of the faithful of the patriarchate became Catholic through Rome's missionary activity. It was not until 1716 that the final split within the Greek patriarchate of Antioch took place.

At the time Patriarch Cyril, a friend of the French consul in Sidon, was persuaded to send his profession to Rome.

After his death and the death of Athanasius III Dabbas who succeeded him, his nephew Serafino Tanas was elected to the Patriarchate by the practising Catholics of Damascus and took the name of Cyril VI. The Greeks of Constantinople immediately set up a Cypriot in opposition to him, Mgr. Sylvester, who took the name of Jeremy.... Cyril VI was driven out of Damascus and took refuge in the Lebanon in the Monastery of the Holy Saviour near Sidon where he worked to unite the Lebanese Melkites with Rome.³⁴

Charles Malik, in reflecting on the division in the Greek patriarchate of Antioch notes that:

the documents reveal an incredible amount of intrigue, malice, spitefulness, meanness, mercenariness, venality, pettiness, feuding, vengeance, and violence. Neither the uniates nor the Orthodox were free from any of these traits. They also instigated or sided with non-Christians against each other. They did everything that St. Paul condemns in his epistles. There simply was no Christian charity. This is what happens when utter corruption and rottenness supervene. The indisputable outcome of all this confusion and decadence, however, is that there are today two hierarchies of one and the same rite stemming from the same trunk – the mother Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church.³⁵

Professor Malik emphasises the point that this is largely due to Orthodox decadence and Roman Catholic vitality in mission. The schism shocked the Orthodox Church and helped to awaken it.

In conclusion we must take into account the manner in which the Ottoman authorities related to all the Christian Churches in their domain. They 'dealt with the Christian sects as organised bodies [socio-religious groups] and not as individuals.'³⁶

The Turkish rulers seem to have understood the people with whom they were dealing – a fact which appears to have eluded the Protestant American missionaries. The missionaries dealt with the Christians of Syria and Lebanon as individuals – not as organised bodies. Their relation to the organised bodies was condemnatory. Hitti says that this attitude stemmed from the fact that

Americans inherited to a certain extent European political and religious prejudices against Islam [as well as Eastern Christianity]. An inflated sense of racial superiority and intellectual

complacency made the study of any culture other than European-American seem like a condescension... In their zeal to arouse interest and solicit support for their work, missionaries, often unconsciously, painted Islamic society [and Eastern Christianity] in dark colors or over-emphasized its inferior character.³⁷

The churches of Syria and Lebanon had reached a very low point. To be able to reform, one must be able to determine the underlying reasons, understand them, and seek to remedy the decay. Ottoman rule, history shows, did not provide the most suitable milieu for a lively, reforming, and growing church.

Furthermore, the chief problem which the missionary from America faced was an assumption he had. He had assumed that what is good for America is good for other cultures; what works in America must work for other cultures. Still, the American Protestant missionary was a revivalist, and revivalism cannot flourish except in a culture whose basic unit is the individual. This was not the case in Syria and Lebanon. The Syrian-Lebanese society is family oriented – both the immediate and the larger. Thus those methods which the American missionaries utilised and which were predicated on individual responses were inevitably ineffective to a large degree.

Footnotes

- 1 G. C. Anawati, 'The Roman Catholic Church and Churches in Communion with Rome,' in A. J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 352.
- 2 Julius Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East*, AMS Press, New York, 1970, reprint, p. 60. See also C. H. Malik, 'The Orthodox Church,' in A. J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 300. Dr. Malik shows that the *dhimma* were distinctly second-class citizens.
- 3 Phillip K. Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London 1957, p. 414.
- 4 Aziz S. Atiyah, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1962, p. 252.
- 5 Robin Fedden, *Syria and Lebanon*, John Murray, London, 1965, p. 211.
- 6 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, *op. cit.*, p. 417.
- 7 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 421-422.
- 8 George E. Kirk, *A Short History of the Middle East*, Public Affairs Press, Washington, 1949, p. 103.
- 9 Antonius, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- 10 Shams Ed-Dine er-Rifai, *Tarikh as-Sahafa as-Suriyyah*, Cairo, n.d., p. 28.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 32, my translation.
- 12 Albert Hourani, *A Vision of History: Near Eastern and Other Essays*, Khayats, Beirut 1961, p. 58. See also Raphael Patai, *Golden River to Golden Road* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 324, where he stresses the point that 'religion in the Middle East is the main normative force.'
- 13 Hourani, *A Vision of History*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
- 14 *The Near East: A Modern History*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1958, p. 25.
- 15 George Khodr, 'Orthodoxy in the Middle East During the Last Hundred Years,' *God and Man in Contemporary Christian Thought*, edited by Charles Malik, American University, Beirut, 1970, p. 145.
- 16 C. H. Churchill, *Druzes and the Maronites Under the Turkish Rule from 1840-1860*, Bernard Quatrach, London, 1862, p. 2.

- 17 Hourani, *A Vision of History*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- 18 Joel Carmichael, *The Shaping of the Arabs: A Study in Ethnic Identity*, The Macmillan Company, New York, p. 280. Even though the role which the Christians played in Arab nationalism was vital in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, it is now found instead in Muslim hands.
- 19 The nationalistic movement spearheaded by the Christian community did not exclude non-Christians. For, as Philip K. Hitti notes, on 8 June, 1840, 'Druzes, Christians, Matawilah and Moslems—held a conference at Antilyas, took an oath on the altar of St. Ilyas (Elias) that they would stick together under all conditions, summoned their compatriots to rise in arms against tyrannical authority and pledged themselves 'to fight to restore their independence,' Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 424-425. This banding together of Christians, Muslims, Druzes, and Matawilah in the cause of independence shows clearly that the cause of nationalism had actually assumed a sharp coercive forcefulness upon a wide segment of society shaping definite patterns of behaviour as they sought to get rid of the common enemy.
- 20 Fedden, *op. cit.*, p. 221.
- 21 Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, *op. cit.*, p. 305.
- 22 *The Missionary Herald*, L (1854), p. 135.
- 23 In the nineteenth century, and to an extent today, business in Lebanon was centred in the family. Later on wealth in Lebanon was acquired in one of two ways: education or emigration. The educated improved themselves materially by using modern methodologies in economics, commerce, and development. And the emigrant, through hard labour in his adopted land overseas, developed through the use of his native merchant skills. For a detailed study of this phenomenon see Fuad Khuri, 'The Changing Class Structure in Lebanon,' *Middle East Journal*, XXIII (1969), 29-44.
- 24 For a comprehensive treatment of all the different Churches in the Middle East, see A. J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, part 2. Orthodox, Uniate, Chalcedonian, Oriental, and Protestant Churches are treated fully by a number of significant contributors.
- 25 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, *op. cit.*, p. 247 and *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, IX McGraw-Hill, New York, 1967, p. 245.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 245.
- 27 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
- 28 *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, p. 246. See also Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, *op. cit.*, p. 251.; he demonstrates that had the Maronites actually believed in the doctrine of the one will, the Council of Constantinople would have condemned them. The records of that council do not show that the Maronites were implicated.

- 29 *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
- 30 G. C. Anawati, *op. cit.*, p. 375. Kenneth Scott Latourette, on the other hand, maintains that uninterrupted relations with Rome date back to 1516, *A History of Christianity*, Harper & Row, Publishers New York, 1953, p. 903. Several sources do not agree with Latourette, but support Anawati's argument. For details see Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles d'après Les Documents Originaux* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1913), pp. 1318f. and especially p. 1333, Canon 5. Also *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
- 31 Harriet Martineau, *Eastern Life, Present and Past*, Lea and Blanchard, Philadelphia, 1848, p. 487.
- 32 Brown, *One Hundred Years*, *op. cit.*, p. 976.
- 33 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, *op. cit.*, p. 401.
- 34 Anawati, *op. cit.*, p. 367. For a thorough study of French influence in Lebanon prior to World War I see J. P. Spagnolo, 'French Influence in Syria prior to World War I: The Functional Weakness of Imperialism,' *Middle East Journal*, XXIII (1969), 45-62.
- 35 Malik, *op. cit.*, p. 315.
- 36 Brown, *One Hundred Years*, *op. cit.*, p. 980.
- 37 Philip K. Hitti, 'America and the Arab Heritage,' *The Arab Heritage*, edited by Nabih A. Faris, Princeton University Press, 1944, pp. 13-14.

Chapter 4

The creation of the Evangelical Church in Lebanon

The cultural-religious background of the converts

The Protestant Church in Syria and Lebanon was carved from the existing Eastern Churches. Only very few from non-Christian backgrounds were converted to the Christian faith through the work of the American Protestant missionaries. In this chapter we shall take a close look at all the different types of converts to Protestantism and seek to understand their cultural-religious origins and heritage.

Among the earliest converts were Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, and Druzes. All of them shared one common heritage. They were Levantines. A. H. Hourani describes the Levantine in a very piercing manner.

To be a Levantine is to live in two worlds or more at once, without belonging to either; to be able to go through the external forms which indicate possession of a certain nationality, religion or culture, without actually possessing it. It is no longer to have a standard of values of one's own, not to be able to create but only to imitate; and so not even to imitate correctly, since that also needs a certain originality. It is also to belong to no community and to possess nothing of one's own. It reveals itself in lostness, pretentiousness, cynicism, and despair.¹

Hourani's characterisation of the Levantine is indicting and harsh, but there is an element of truth in his observation of the Levantine's

ability to 'live in two worlds or more at once without belonging to either; to be able to go through the external forms.'

Inasmuch as the Levant was the bridge between Europe and Asia, and between Asia and Africa, its peoples were exposed to a variety of cultural forms and patterns of behaviour. They learned from all; they adapted and adopted some of what they had learned—sometimes adopting without adapting. Thus when the American Protestant missionaries arrived in Syria and Lebanon in the early 1820's, they were another group representing another culture, patterns of life, and religious expression. Their ways were added to the repertoire of some of the Levantines; such may have adopted without adapting what they had learned.

The earliest Maronite converts were men preparing for the priesthood—Assaad Shidyak and Butrus al-Bustani.² Other early contacts of the missionaries were with three Armenians, who were clergy in disfavor with their Church because they had married, a Greek Orthodox teacher, and a Greek Catholic who was engaged by the mission as its bookkeeper and business manager. Through the employment of

native copyists and translators [as well as teachers and clerks]... partly to place them under missionary influence and partly to remedy the effects of the Ottoman decree [which prevented direct proselytism,] the mission was able to reach some whom it would not otherwise have been able to reach.³

Thus, the mission's first contact was with religiously oriented and committed men. These were either preparing for the priesthood or already clergymen such as the Armenians.

Native helpers were also engaged as language teachers. Shidyak was retained for the teaching of Arabic, as was Bustani. Armenian teachers were employed with the aim that through them the missionaries would reach the rest of the Armenian Orthodox Church. Thus

going to Sidon for aid in his legitimate studies, Mr. Goodell formed the acquaintance of Yakob Agha, an Armenian ecclesiastic, who dared to marry, a privilege not allowed as a bishop.... [and] with Dionysius, another Armenian bishop, who committed a similar offense.⁴

Religiously committed men as well as men who were disaffected with their own Church were drawn to the orbit of the missionaries. These individuals were to serve as a stepping stone in the attempt to revitalise the Eastern Christians.

There were other types to whom the Protestant missionary call appealed. Their response was not, however, based on religious zeal or the desire to shake off the complacent attitude derived from decades of religious deprivation. The main force which motivated this type to seek the Protestant faith was the gaining of protection granted only to the Franks (foreigners) by foreign consuls. In the 1820's the American missionaries were under the protection of the British consuls.⁵

This was true in South Lebanon more so than in Beirut, and especially true of the town of Hassbayah. Those who lived in Beirut were able to reap some benefit from the fact that Beirut was becoming a commercial centre and its harbour was growing; they, therefore, found protection in the wealth they were able to accumulate. But those who lived in the remote areas of the southern mountains were completely deprived of all economic benefit accruing from the increased commerce in Beirut.

When Protestant missionary activity moved outside Beirut—particularly to South Lebanon where the Christian population was almost exclusively Greek Orthodox—trouble broke out between the missionaries and their new companions in the faith on the one side and with the Greek Orthodox community on the other. Hassbayah was the scene of the worse of these conflicts. Orthodox converts sought protection under the British consul assuming it a natural Protestant prerogative. Through him they attempted to evade paying taxes to the Ottoman-appointed rulers of the area.

To accomplish this they formed a deputation which came to see Eli Smith in Beirut so that the mission would arrange for this protection.

A deputation formed from the Greek Orthodox community in the village (Hassbayah) called on the mission and expressed a desire to become Protestant. They considered as oppressive the taxes

demanded from them by the civil authorities, and left disappointed with their religious leaders, who failed to remove the cause of the grievance.⁶

Eli Smith assessed the movement among the citizens of Hassbayah well. The manner in which they had presented their case did not indicate why they were unhappy in the church they desired to leave; and they did not understand the nature of the church they sought to join. All they understood was that under the protection of the British consul, they would evade the payment of taxes. The mission made clear to them that this objective could not be attained by becoming Protestants. Smith insisted that if they desired protection under the British consul, they had better approach him directly. And if they still desired to become Protestant, they should withdraw from their church and form their own.

Asad Rustum describes the reaction of the Orthodox Church's hierarchy:

They leaped as [with anger] to the defence and prevented the faithful from sending their children to the schools of the American missionaries.⁷

After a period of time, Smith and other missionaries were able to form a Protestant Church in Hassbayah based on a more enlightened approach. Nearly one hundred and fifty persons became Protestant. But tension mounted between the new converts and their former fellow members of the Orthodox Church. The tension was due largely to the fact that the Hassbayah Protestants were able to get the protection they had sought from the British consul. Violence, therefore, broke out in Hassbayah between the two factions.

The Antiochene Patriarch Methodius, came to Hassbayah from Damascus in the fall of 1844 and got in touch with the leaders of the Protestant movement, attempted to dissuade them, and sought to bring them back into the Church. They answered: 'Our Lord, we want to examine the Gospel, and if we find the way of salvation, which is our goal, we remain, or else we return.'⁸

Some did return to the Orthodox Church, but most of them remained Protestant.

The Patriarch lifted the anathema he had pronounced from those who did return to the 'mother church.' The removal reads:

Glory be to God always. Methodius, Patriarch of Antioch by the grace of Almighty God. Grace and blessing be upon our beloved spiritual daughter Hilaneh, wife of our beloved son in the Lord Sheikh Youssif Ghorra (Kfeir). Whereas our aforesaid daughter is referred to as having uttered unbecoming words and which caused the prevention of her husband to return to the Church, and for this reason our heart was hardened and the like; and now that her aforementioned husband our son has returned to the lap of the compassionate mother which is our Eastern Orthodox Holy Church, and our daughter Hilaneh has offered true repentance, let her be blessed and her husband by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and by us too. Let her children be blessed with the works of her hands and let all her doings be acceptable before the majesty of the Almighty. And his grace and our blessings and our intercessions cover her, her husband, and all her children, and anyone related to her. Amen.⁹

The mission sent Butrus al-Bustani to Hassbayah to investigate the situation and attempt to make peace. This was after the civil war of 1845 when many of the Protestants of Hassbayah had left the town and had taken refuge in 'Abeih. Upon studying the situation he recommended to the mission that: there would be persecution awaiting those who returned to Hassbayah; if the mission did not help them they could become the worst of its enemies, and the hope that many in Hassbayah would become Protestant would be lost. The mission had to help them financially if they were not to be looked down upon when they returned to their town. If all this were not done the citizens of Hassbayah would simply assume that the Ottoman authorities stood against the spread of Protestantism. As a result of Butrus al-Bustani's recommendations the mission did help and the Hassbayah Protestants were re-settled.

Conflict was not restricted to the confrontation with the Greek Orthodox Church. Serious problems arose between the missionaries and the Maronites. The Arabic Bibles, Catholic translation, reprinted by the missionaries excluded the Apocrypha, and the distribution of these Bibles provided the spark which ignited the conflict with the Catholics.

First among those who attacked the missionaries was the Maronite Patriarch. His reason for the attack related to the omission of the Apocrypha; the text was full of errors; and hence, misleading to the innocent readers. The Patriarch ordered the members of his Church to submit to him all copies of these Bibles which were in their hands. If they would not comply, they would be excommunicated.

On the recommendation of the Maronite Patriarch, Rome joined the attack on the missionaries.

On January 31, 1824 Cardinal Somaglia, Dean of the Sacred College of the Propaganda Fide, wrote three letters addressed respectively to the Maronite Patriarch, the Maronite Bishop at Antura, and the Papal vicar for Syria and Palestine. In these letters he denounced the Protestant missionaries as '*banditori dell'errore e dell'corruzione*' and their copies of the Bible as corrupted and vitiated.¹⁰

These were the beginnings of the trouble with the Maronites. The conflict was intensified and escalated when several Maronites became Protestants and acted as the main driving force behind the founding of the Evangelical Church in Beirut. Notable among these was Butrus al-Bustani, a graduate of the 'Ayn Waraqa school, a relative of the Patriarch who was to be sent to Rome for further theological study.

Separation from original roots

F. Goodsell summarises the intent of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Unfortunately intent and action are not always congruent with each other. He says:

Missionaries were sent to build and not to tear down. The mood was thoroughly friendly in approach to all peoples, even though it was inevitable that in the declaration of truth as they understood it, error should be branded as error.¹¹

However friendly the approach or the intent, the fact of the matter remains that a group of men whose cultural and religious experience and belief was totally different came to Syria and Lebanon gripped

with zeal and enthusiasm, confronted the existing Church order and culture, the result of which was conflict and alienation. Those whom they sought to help, they instead alienated. Without recognising the underlying reason for the alienation, Rufus Anderson notes:

The Papal Church became thoroughly alarmed. Letters were addressed from Rome... urging... to render ineffectual... the impious undertaking of those missionaries. Though feebly enforced by the Turkish authorities this gave weight and influence, for a time, to the 'anathemas,' of the Maronite and Syrian Patriarchs against the 'Bible men.'¹²

The response of the Eastern Churches to the Protestant missionaries is very understandable. Strangers threatening a time-honored religious way of life and which had survived in spite of centuries of oppression by non-Christian rulers was more than could be tolerated.

Eli Smith had arrived in Beirut early in the year 1827. In March of the same year an important prayer meeting was held. Attending the meeting, along with the missionaries, were two Armenians, their wives, and the wife of the British consul. These had been admitted into the membership of the mission church.

This admission of converts into a church, without regard to their previous ecclesiastical relation, was a practical ignoring of the old church organizations in that region. It was so understood, and the spirit of opposition and persecution was roused to the utmost. In the Maronite and Greek Catholic churches, severe denunciations were uttered against the missionaries, and all who would render them any service.¹³

Attempts to convert the so-called 'nominal Christians' continued. Denunciations and anathemas became the common every day expression of the Eastern churches against the Protestant missionaries together with their followers. Under persecution the number of converts increased. And in order to attempt a better understanding of the phenomenon of conversion, the

examination [will suggest] that the change in perspective is not so swift nor so drastic as converts seem to think it is. Berger... [points out] that a central feature of conversions is a *post hoc* reconstruction of one's biography in the light of the newly adopted meaning system whereby new interpretations are read

into acts which, at the time they occurred, were defined in a rather different way.¹⁴

The process of *post hoc* reconstruction coupled with the anathemas and denunciations by the leaders of the converts' original churches marked this separation – complete separation from their original roots.

The change from Catholicism, Maronite or Greek, as well as from Orthodox must be understood as

a major discontinuity in behavior, a wrenching of the personality, associated with such descriptive phrases as 'rebirth,' 'finding the light,' 'visitation of the Holy Spirit,'... all of which indicate that the convert has apparently experienced a drastic shift in the orientation of his valuation of reality.¹⁵

This conversion experience, irrespective of the motivation which led to it, brought about the necessity of an independent organisation suitable to the newly adopted meaning system to deal adequately with their 'beliefs and practices relative to sacred thing,' as Durkheim would suggest. However, if Hourani's depiction of the character of the Levantine is accurate, then we might do well to note what Peter Berger proposes.

Instead of speaking of conversion... We would prefer to use the more neutral term 'alternation' to describe this phenomenon. The... situation just described brings with it the possibility that an individual may alternate back and forth between [two] meaning systems. Each time, the meaning system he enters provides him with an interpretation of his existence and his world, including in this interpretation an explanation of the meaning system he has abandoned.¹⁶

Even if we were not to agree with Hourani's assessment of the character of the Levantine, we can legitimately suggest that during the period immediately following conversion – depending on the motivation leading to it – 'alternation' rather than conversion would more accurately describe the behaviour of some of the new converts. But Hourani is not completely correct. His inaccuracy can best be seen in the testimony of the earliest convert. There certainly was not any 'alternation,' in his position. He actually had experienced a genuine 'wrenching of the personality' and a drastic shift in his whole meaning system.

Shidyak, in his confrontation with Jonas King who had written a farewell letter to his friends in which he detailed his reasons why he could not become a Roman Catholic, attempted to refute King, but instead was himself converted to the Protestant faith. For his new-found faith he endured imprisonment, pain, suffering, and eventual death in a monastery's prison cell.¹⁷

Even for those who had come to the Protestant faith not out of religious conviction or true conversion, there was no possibility of return to 'mother church' except as repentant, humbled dissidents who had come back to their senses. The pride inherent in Lebanese mountain society however, meant that return was, not possible except for those who either understood the meaning of humility, or for the weak-willed.

For both, those who became Protestant as a result of a genuine conversion experience and those who changed for other reasons, the old roots were severed. All proceeded toward the '*post hoc* reconstruction' of their lives. They began to strike new roots by means of appropriating a new plausibility structure through which they would find belonging and support.

An attempt to strike new roots

By the early 1840's sufficient numbers of Catholics, Greek and Maronite, as well as Orthodox Christians had been converted to Protestantism. The numbers were adequate warrant for the formation of Evangelical churches in Beirut, Hassbayah, Sidon, and other towns. The converts included also some Druzes, an offshoot of Islam.¹⁸

The first church was organised in Beirut. Several of the leaders from among the new evangelicals began the process leading toward the organisation of the church in 1847. They met in Beirut and in 'Abeih, the latter being the town in which the Evangelical seminary was located. At 'Abeih they drafted a petition which they were to present to the mission with the goal being the formation of an Evangelical church in Beirut. This church would include in its

membership not only those who lived in Beirut, but also those who lived anywhere within Lebanon. The understanding was, however that separate congregations would be formed in the villages and towns as soon as adequate numbers of converts were ready to be organised into churches.

Butrus al-Bustani was among the prominent leaders of the movement. It became obvious to him and the others that a return to the 'mother churches' was an impossibility for the converts especially after they had been filled with the zeal which only the revivalist missionaries could inspire. Thus, the organisation of an Evangelical church became inevitable.

The most prominent event of 1848, was the formation of a purely native church at Beirut. Hitherto the native converts had joined the mission church, formed at an early period of the mission.... Circumstances had made it seem inexpedient... to form a church exclusively of native converts.... At the annual meeting of the mission, a petition was presented from the native Protestants at Beirut to the American missionaries, asking that they might be organized into a church, according to certain principles and rules embodied in their petition.... The principles proposed for the constitution and discipline of the church [were] modified... at the suggestion of the mission.²⁰

The inexpediency was possibly related to the fact that in the Ottoman Empire all religious groups were organised into *millets* (religious bodies recognised by the authorities), each with a head directly responsible to the Porte and who acted as official spokesman. The Protestants were not as yet so organised. It may be equally possible to understand the inexpediency in terms of the missionaries' hope that they might yet be able to cooperate with the already existing churches.²¹ When that appeared impossible after the charges and counter-charges by both parties, it was decided to go ahead – to organise a national evangelical church and seek recognition as a *millet*.

By seeking to be organised into a Protestant church, the new converts believed they would be able to strike new roots. To form a new community which would give them support and a sense of belonging became a burning issue. In the petition which they presented to the American mission we find this sense of urgency.

We can never forget the great benefits which have been conferred on us through you, in being turned by your instrumentality to the saving doctrines of the gospel and the rejection of the carnal doctrines of the churches in which we were born.... Nor can we describe the joy we have in the hope, that God is about to open the way for our countrymen to receive the knowledge of his Son and adhere to his gospel.²²

To the new converts a new day had dawned. They had found the pearl which had for so long been buried. Nothing from the past Christian experience was Christian enough when the new light shone on it. They had received their beatific vision.

At the same time, they realised that they had severed the old roots. Now they possess a new meaning system. Religion was no longer a matter of inheritance. Faith in Jesus Christ became the sole grounds for church membership. Those who were once members of different churches separated from each other by 'animosities and jealousies,' now abandoned all differences, prejudices, and hatreds – they became one body through faith in Jesus Christ.

The new church organisation needed a constitution and a well-defined discipline. Butrus al-Bustani was charged by the nationals to prepare the appropriate documents. Obviously his evangelical understanding was gained from the American missionaries. Hence, the statements which he had prepared reflected what he had learned at the able hands of Eli Smith.

It appears, however, that Bustani did not quite reflect sufficiently the Presbyterian form of government in the constitution and the discipline to the complete satisfaction of the American mission. Thus, both were 'modified' to conform with the expectations of the mission. Bustani, for example, had suggested that

each of the evangelical churches of Syria shall have an elder, called also bishop and pastor, possessing the commendable qualities mentioned in I Timothy iii.2-9, and Titus i.6-9; and one or more deacons possessed of the praiseworthy qualities mentioned in I Timothy iii.8-12.²³

Implicitly, Bustani reflects his Maronite background in this constitutional phrasing. Even though he may not have consciously

desired to retain a familiar form with familiar titles, he still had made the proposal.

Had the mission accepted the form of government proposed by Bustani, an ecclesiastical-cultural kinship with the Syrian-Lebanese Christian heritage would have been maintained. That, unfortunately, did not happen. On the contrary, the form of government which was finally adopted reflected the New England evangelical heritage. An already developed form which was culturally conditioned and which reflected the character and the temperament of a different people was transplanted whole. New England Presbyterianism became the inheritance of an ancient people with a Christian heritage as old as Christianity itself.

The National Evangelical Church in Beirut was formally organised on 31 March, 1848. The mission advised the members of the church not to elect a native pastor. Eli Smith, instead, was appointed pastor of the new church.

A native church without a native pastor was a contradiction in terms, and defeated one of Anderson's cardinal principles. But he must share with the mission the responsibility for failure; he forced their pace and put them in an anomalous situation.²⁴

While Tibawi's analysis is correct, it is not completely fair in view of the circumstances. The only man in the Beirut Church who was suitable for ordination was Butrus al-Bustani. Rufus Anderson, then secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, after his visit to Syria in 1844, had recommended Bustani for theological education.

In spite of the urging of Eli Smith, Bustani was not willing to be ordained yet. Smith did not give up and Bustani did study theology. Six years after the organisation of the church in Beirut, it appeared as if Bustani had changed his mind and was then inclined to be ordained. In 1854 the church in Beirut issued a call to Bustani and asked the mission to ordain him. In response the mission indicated that there were difficulties in the way which could not be surmounted.

Bustani's relationship with Smith was too deep to be affected by the action of the mission. But after Smith died, Bustani began to

move away from the missionaries. He nevertheless maintained a close relationship to the National Evangelical Church till the end of his life.²⁵

In 1860, Bustani founded a newspaper which he called the *Syrian Clarion* and through which he called on the warring factions in Mount Lebanon to put an end to their strife. He was obsessed with the love of the nation to the extent that he described it as emanating from faith. Antonius describes the founding of the *Syrian Clarion* in these words:

The upheaval of 1860, accompanied as it was by a savage massacre of Christians in Damascus and the Lebanon, had roused the passions of religious hatred to a murderous pitch. Bustani sought to work for its appeasement by means of a newspaper which he founded in Bairut in that year... the first country... devoted to the preaching of concord.²⁶

Bustani later established two more newspapers: *al-Jinan* and *al-Junainah*.

Most significant among his other contributions to the general cultural uplift of the country, was the founding of the National School (*al-Madrasah al-Wataniyyah*) in 'Abeih which was moved to Beirut in 1863. This school served as the forerunner of the Syrian Protestant College. And when that college was founded in 1866, Bustani's school was incorporated into it as its preparatory school.

He was also very active in civic affairs and scientific studies which he believed would raise the level of the nation and bring it to stand with the more advanced ones. Therefore he founded *al-Jam'iyyah al-Ilmiyyah as-Suriyyah* (the Syrian Scientific Society) in which membership was restricted to Syrian nationals for the most part. However, Cornelius Van Dyck, medical doctor and missionary, translator of the Bible into Arabic, was admitted into the society.

In order to contribute to the general field of learning, Bustani compiled a dictionary of Arabic, *Muhit al-Muhit* (the circumference of the circumference), and its abridgement, *Qutr al-Muhit* (the diameter of the circumference). He also edited the encyclopaedia, *Daairat al-Maarif*. He was unable to complete the whole encyclopaedia; he finished five of its eleven volumes before he died in

1883, and his son completed the remaining six volumes. The *Daairat al-Maarif* remains to this day one of the best encyclopaedias available in the Arabic language.²⁷

Teacher, preacher, peace-maker, national leader, author, compiler of a monumental dictionary, and editor of an encyclopaedia, but above all translator of the Bible into Arabic along with Eli Smith and Cornelius Van Dyck, Bustani left his imprint on the National Evangelical Church and the whole Syrian-Lebanese society.

Bustani was a son of the land and of the culture, but who for ordination purposes apparently had not become sufficiently like the missionaries nor internalised their meaning system completely. However, if the mission had ordained him, and if his far-reaching talents had been fully utilised, the new roots which were struck in the Lebanese cultural-religious soil at that time could have been more authentically Lebanese.

Aliens at home

Ancient and well-founded traditions as well as plausibility structures were discarded under the mission's influence. They were replaced by new ideas, patterns, and plausibility structures which had been developed in a foreign cultural-religious situation. New forms of worship, hymnody, and unfamiliar ways were introduced. Worship assumed a poor simplicity unknown in the Christian East.²⁸

The missionaries, armed with the scriptural message, were not bothered by the possibility of the breakdown of the family unit. To compensate for this situation, they emphasised the spiritual family which was being formed. In effect all that was meaningful in a society which placed great value on the family, was challenged. And the result was a thorough shaking of the foundations on which indigenous Christians had stood for centuries.

The consequences of missionary activity have been both intended and unintended by the missionaries themselves. Indeed, it seems probable that the unintended effects of missionary work outweigh those that were intended.²⁹

The missionaries' declared purpose was the proclamation of the gospel and the leading of men into the way of salvation. If the proclamation of 'truth' exposed existing 'error' – which they deemed an inevitable process – so be it. The proclamation of truth as they understood it occasioned the challenge to the norms, patterns of life, and plausibility structures. Inasmuch as the missionaries, from the evidence available, 'were firmly convinced of the superiority of the Western culture in general,'³⁰ they did not take into serious account what effects they were causing in the culture of which they were guests.

Among these effects which they unintentionally caused was an identity crisis. The new converts to the Protestant faith may not have consciously recognised that they were undergoing an identity change and crisis. But

every identity change threatens to re-expose us to our problems... identity changes that we desire are at the same time anxiety provoking.... Every change... requires the eradication of something in one's former identity and an invitation into the mysteries of a new one with a resulting new sense of self.³¹

Sidney E. Mead expresses well the concern we have before us. He says, 'the basic connotation,' when we consider the question of identity, 'when applied to a person or a group, is that of sameness, or oneness, that persists in time.' A person or a group are known and identified by their 'habitual acts, physical, mental, spiritual.' The substance of identity consists of the 'observable, persistent traits' which the individual or society exhibit.³²

The Syrian-Lebanese family is very closely-knit, and patriarchal in structure. It plays a significant role in the conduct of life; in the practices which pertain to daily living. For example, if a member of the larger family gets sick, and does not have adequate funds to provide medical care for himself, all members of the family appear at the hospital with money to pay the bills. He may pay them back, or he may not. No questions are asked. The family provided

and still provides for the Syrian-Lebanese his security; belonging to the family does provide support in more than one way – spiritual, emotional, as well as material.

Those who became Protestant broke up the family unit. Their exit brought with it the consequences of discontinuity: they had no family with which they could identify, depend upon, or belong to; they became estranged and alienated.

Without [the] sense of solidarity – of belonging – the individual has no roots, no past, and therefore no future. [He lacks] the maintenance of an inner solidarity with [his original] group.³³

Having denied their past, the new converts became rootless. Having cut themselves off from their past, their future could not have much promise especially in a land where family relations are of utmost importance.

But religion, whether in the old family unit and church, or in the new spiritual family, serves as an integrating factor which holds people together. The new Protestant church possessed 'common... ultimate values'³⁴ which bound the members together. They became identifiable in the sense that they exhibited a common way of life and a set of traits which distinguished them from those around them. However, those who were around them were members of their own larger families, their relatives, and friends. This accentuated the problem and their alienation became more acute. Their only hope was that their new religious group could serve as substitute for family.

Religion is above all, an ordering principle in human life. It organizes the individual's experience in terms of ultimate meanings that include but also transcend the individual. If many people share such an ordering principle, it becomes possible for them not only to deal with each other within the framework of meaning given, but to transcend themselves and their various egotisms.³⁵

Religion, as the 'ordering principle,' set in motion a quest for a new identity through a new community.

This quest culminated in the organisation of a number of Protestant churches which were related to each other. Together

they formed the new community which offered them the needed 'common... ultimate values.' Social change followed the conversion experience which had plucked the converts from their old plausibility structures as well as their major source of support, their families, and imposed upon them a new system of meaning. Thomas O'Dea cautions, however, that

conversion – the acceptance of new religions – is itself closely related to the needs and aspirations which are highly affected by the social circumstances of the people involved, although social conditions are not a simple and unique element in such cases.³⁶

The minds of those who accepted the Protestant faith, thus, must have been 'in some measure prepared';³⁷ otherwise, no conversions would have been possible.

The conditions of the decaying Ottoman Empire affected and infected existing church life. Disaffection and dissatisfaction with the church of the fathers, in some circles, had intensified to the extent that many Lebanese found in the religion being proclaimed by the missionaries the heaven-sent answer. To illustrate this fact, Anderson points out:

Early in the year 1844, a considerable body of the Hassbeiyans seceded from the Greek Church, declared themselves Protestants, and made a formal application to the mission for religious instruction. About fifty men came at one time to Beirut for that purpose, and asked for ministers to teach them. Their dissatisfaction with their Church was not of recent date.... It had arisen from the selfishness and worldliness of the clergy and their consequent neglect of the flock.³⁸

The Protestant missionaries did not present correctives to deal with the practices of the clergy. Instead, they dealt with what needed no treatment. They fought Eastern theology and offered a new theology, a new understanding, and a new meaning system. The Lebanese Christians were not dissatisfied with their Church because its theology was antiquated or no longer tenable. Their dissatisfaction was based on the practices and patterns of behaviour of the clergy who were corrupt and who did not give their people the needed pastoral care. As Tibawi puts it, the missionaries

from the beginning... made the tactical error of delivering a

frontal attack on rites and ceremonies.... The result was a bitter feud with ecclesiastical authorities, a feud which rules out reform through native sympathizers.... Instead sympathizers were made Protestant converts. Once converted... they too failed to act as evangelical agencies among the eastern Christians or,... among the Muslims.³⁷

As we established, the converts were alienated from their own people; that is why they could not exert a positive influence on them.

For their part, the missionaries did not take seriously the historical situation of Syria-Lebanon in the first half of the nineteenth century. This situation was not seen as the consequence of over three hundred years of subjugation to non-Christian rulers, where in order to survive, the Christians had had to appropriate some of the practices of their rulers and their general milieu.

Had the missionaries been perceptive, they would have set for themselves 'the goal of studying reality and [the] phenomena [they witnessed] in all their uniqueness.'⁴⁰ But the missionaries were neither historians nor sociologists; they were revivalists under the coercive pressure of the social fact of their cultural-religious experience, namely, that the millennium was around the corner. And there was no time for study or for understanding. There was no time for winning the confidence and the building of trust in relation to the Eastern Churches.

The Protestant Church which was born in the late 1840's and the early 1850's in Lebanon, were it not for the use of the Arabic language in worship, was indeed a transplanted New England Church. Its constitution, its discipline, its practices were all foreign. And the people who formed its membership became aliens at home. They were separated from family and friend; from their society and culture; from their heritage by new ways of thinking, of doing, and of being. These new ways failed to promote the vital element of belonging.

Footnotes

- 1 A. H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon, A Political Essay*, Oxford University Press, London, 1946, p. 71.
- 2 *The Missionary Herald*, XXIII (1827), 17. Shidyak, a graduate of 'Ayn Waraqah Maronite College, was a secretary of the Maronite Patriarch before becoming the Arabic instructor of Jonas King. See also Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, *op. cit.*, p. 36; also A. L. Tibawi, 'The American Missionaries in Beirut and Butrus al-Bustani,' *Middle East Affairs*, edited by Albert Hourani, Southern Illinois University Press, 1963, pp. 150-157.
- 3 Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.
- 4 Anderson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 41-42.
- 5 Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- 7 Rustum, *op. cit.*, p. 192, author's translation.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 193, author's translation.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 193, author's translation.
- 10 Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- 11 Fred F. Goodsell, *You Shall Be My Witness*, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Boston, 1959, p. 21.
- 12 Anderson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 42.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 14 Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, Rand McNally & Company, Chicago, p. 7, n. 14.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 16 Peter L. Berger, *Invitation to Sociology, A humanistic Perspective*, Anchor Books, New York, 1963, pp. 51-52.
- 17 *The Missionary Herald*, XXXIII (1827), pp. 71-76, give the details of the conversion experience. Rufus Anderson in his history of the mission to the Oriental Churches dedicates a chapter to the Martyr of Lebanon, Assaad Shidyak, Anderson, *op. cit.*, Vol., I, p. 52f. See also Isaac Bird,

- Martyr of Lebanon*, American Tract Society, Boston, 1864. The whole book deals with Shidyak's firm stand in the new found faith.
- 18 Anderson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 243f. Anderson speaks of a faithful convert from the Druze religion who was admitted into the church. Even under persecution he persevered. However, Anderson records a very interesting phenomenon. Many Druzes had come to the missionaries seeking baptism, but were turned down. They were turned down because the missionaries were not sufficiently convinced of their genuine conversion experience. Heads of families and chiefs had come to the missionaries quoting scriptural passages which had convinced them of the Christian faith. The Bible tracts they were using had been given to them by the missionaries. Why did the missionaries refuse to baptise these Druzes? One answer can be suggested. The missionaries were revivalists who knew how to deal with backsliding Christians and those whose faith had lapsed. But they did not know what to do with those of non-Christian backgrounds. A fifth century missionary would have asked: 'where is the nearest river?' Blanke, *op. cit.*, p. 89 shows that the missionaries were the "children" of the pietistic movement; they were revivalists; they were not missionaries in the true sense of the word. See also Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 100 regarding the evangelical activity in Hassbayah among the Druzes.
 - 19 *The Missionary Herald*, XLIV (1848), 266f.
 - 20 Anderson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 368-369.
 - 21 The initial goal of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was to cooperate with the already existing churches in Syria-Lebanon, and together with them they would form a coalition, once the Syrian-Lebanese Christians were revitalized, which will confront Islam and Judaism. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 135f.
 - 22 *The Missionary Herald*, XLIV (1848), p. 266.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, p. 268, Constitution, Article I.
 - 24 Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
 - 25 Bustani's relationship to Van Dyck dates back to the time when Van Dyck had come to Beirut and shared mission with Bustani. When Bustani died in 1883, Van Dyck was to preach at the funeral. The occasion was highly charged with emotion. All that Van Dyck could say: 'My friend and the companion of my youth,' Jurji Zaydan, *Taraajim Mashaahir ash-Sharq fil-Qarn at-Taasi* 'Ashaar [The Biographies of the Notables of the Nineteenth Century], Vol. II, Dar Maktabat al-Hayat, Beirut, n.d., p. 55.
 - 26 Antonius, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
 - 27 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, *op. cit.*, p. 462, and Zaydan, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
 - 28 A popular saying developed as a result: as bare and empty as a Protestant Church.

- 29 Nottingham, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 187.
- 31 Ward H. Goodenough, 'Human Purpose in Life,' *Zygon*, I (1966), 225.
- 32 Sidney E. Mead, 'History and Identity,' *The Journal of Religion*, LI (1971), 3.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 5, whether the exit was that of an individual or an entire nuclear family, it occasioned the same break with the extended family.
- 34 William F. Schweiker, 'Religion as a Superordinate Meaning System and Socio-Psychological Integration,' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, VIII (1969), 300.
- 35 Peter L. Berger, 'Religious Institutions,' *Sociology*, edited by Neil Smelser, Wiley and Sons, New York, 1967, p. 340.
- 36 Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, Prentice-Hall, 1966, p. 60.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- 38 Anderson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 264.
- 39 Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, *op. cit.*, p. 309.
- 40 Julien Freund, *The Sociology of Max Weber*, Vintage Books, New York, 1969, p. 61.

Chapter 5

The Evangelical Church in Lebanon

Towards a sociological understanding of ecclesiology

External religious forms are culturally conditioned and societally forged. Ecclesiological structures are such external religious forms. Even the seemingly monolithic Catholic Church has allowed for a number of variants to accommodate the cultural-societal dictates of her various components.¹

The Levant is a distinct socio-cultural unit. A cultural unit is defined ecologically, geographically, politically, and religiously; such a cultural unit shares common values, styles of life, and patterns of behaviour. The Christian in the Levant constituted the predominant majority prior to the rise of Islam.

But the Levant was overrun by Islam during the seventh and eighth centuries, and many of its Christian inhabitants became Muslims. However, there remained a significant number who did not convert.

Under a variety of Muslim rulers from initial Arab, to Memluk, to Ottoman, the Christians of the Levant interacted with their Muslim rulers and neighbours and appropriated many of their ways, mores and values. One must keep in mind that the Muslim and the Christian shared the one heritage – that of the Levantine. Thus, then, it is not so strange that the Christian would internalise and appropriate some of his Muslim neighbours' ways, mores, and values; the Muslim himself was not exempt from internalising, and

appropriating some of his Christian neighbours' values, patterns of behaviour, and life style.

It is against this background that we must attempt to understand the ecclesiological institution of the Church. Among the most important components, organisational and structural, are the family – both extended and nuclear; the village; and the city. Add to these organisational structural units the questions of authority, of relation, and their implications in connection with the manner in which institutions are organised.

The Old Testament narratives indicate that the structure of society in the Levant, prior to the Christian era,² was patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal.³ The New Testament narratives hardly reflect any change in that structure. From the available historical evidence, it appears that the patriarchal structure of society did not change, at least not until the contemporary period. 'The normal family is, traditionally, extended not nuclear.'⁴

St. Paul was culturally formed in the same milieu. His writings represent a clear cultural orientation in which the father-husband figure reflects the seat of authority. The father-figure imagery, expectations and responsibilities are transferred to the *episcopus-presbyteros*: he cared for his family, taught it, and wielded authority within it. The father-husband was the head of the physical family;⁵ and the *episcopus-presbyteros* was the head of the spiritual family.⁶

It is not at all amazing, therefore, that the early Church made the transference from the authoritative father-husband to the authoritative father-bishop, or bishop-elder and vested in him similar responsibilities. And inasmuch as the Church had existed in the Levant since the most primitive Christian era, it was among the first to make the transference. Further, the family organisation and structure continued in the same tradition and so did the Church in the area of our concern.

In other words, the Church in the Levant and the family structures were parallel and the first is predicated on the second in terms of organisation and functional operation. Ecclesiological forms are, thus, rooted in sociological and cultural forms. Church structures tend to reflect the culture in which they grow.

At the time of the arrival of the American Protestant missionaries, the family in Syria-Lebanon was very much of the extended type with the father holding the seat of authority. The phenomenon of the extended family, in its patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal tradition, constituted an incomprehensible problem to the missionaries. Neither their own family background, nor their culture, nor their Church were in any way similar to what they found. All was strange; all was curious; all, therefore, was ignored and branded as 'heathen,' or un-Christian.

The missionaries were under the pressure of the imminent millennium. And therefore they did not realise that Levantine society is 'culturally determined by a... normative pattern'⁷ – the family. Its structure in the village and in the city of that time found authority clearly defined and vested in the father. Similarly, Church structures were an 'iconic representation'⁸ of the family and its organisation.

This indeed is its particular manner of achieving, maintaining and institutionalising its necessary cohesion, – not to say identity.⁹

The pressure of the social fact of the imminent millennium was, apparently, too powerful and coercive for them to take the time to study what they had encountered.

Three Protestant Churches in the Lebanon: an ecclesiological analysis

We shall analyse here three Protestant Churches which now exist in Lebanon. All of them relate historically to Western missions. They are: the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon; the Union of American Evangelical Churches in the Near East; and the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church in Jordan and Lebanon. The first two are the outcome of the work of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; while the third had its origins in the work of the Church Missionary Society of London which carried on the work begun by Levi Parsons, the earliest missionary of the American Board to Palestine.

The National Evangelical Synod represents the Presbyterian heritage. Most of the early missionaries of the American Board to Syria were Presbyterians; furthermore, in 1870 the Old and New School Presbyterians were united and the Presbyterian Church in the United States formed its own Board of Foreign Missions. Through comity agreements the Presbyterians were to continue the work in Syria and the Congregationalists to continue the work in Turkey.

For the most part the work of the Congregational Church in Turkey was among the Armenians. Thus, the Armenian Protestants in Turkey adopted the congregational form of church government. With the Turkish persecution of the Armenians late last century and early this century, many Armenians took refuge in Syria and Lebanon. Today there are about half a million Armenians in these two countries.

After the creation of the state of Israel in Palestine in 1948, Lebanon received its share of Palestinian refugees. Among them were many Episcopalians. Therefore, the jurisdiction of the Episcopal diocese of Jordan was extended into Lebanon.

Inasmuch as these three churches are related to each other in terms of their origins, and inasmuch as they are now found in Lebanon and are engaged in cooperative work – such as theological education and campus ministry – analysis shows that the kinship in culture and social backgrounds have to a large extent determined their church structures and organisation, in spite of the claimed heritages of each.

One of the historical methods for the understanding of the nature of the Church is to approach it through creedal affirmations which reflect that nature. A number of Reformed and Protestant creedal positions which have affected the Evangelical churches in Lebanon will serve as our guides. First among these is the Second Helvetic Confession. It defines the Church as:

a company of the faithful called and gathered out of the world; a communion... of all saints, that is, of them who truly know and rightly worship and serve the true God, in Jesus Christ the Saviour, by the word and the Holy Spirit, and who by faith are

partakers of all those good graces which are freely offered through Christ.¹⁰

Another Reformed statement, the Heidelberg Catechism gives the following understanding of the nature of the Church in response to the question: 'What believest thou concerning the Holy Catholic Church of Christ?'

That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself, by His Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith, and that I am, and forever shall remain, a living member thereof.¹¹

Further, the Westminster Confession of Faith reinforces what has so far been professed about the nature of the Church inasmuch as it says:

The Catholic or universal Church... consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all... Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints.... And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.¹²

A final statement defining the Church in an attempt to embrace the whole spectrum represented in the three churches under study comes from the 'Thirty Nine Articles of Religion' which teaches:

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinances, in all those things that of necessity are requisites to the same.¹³

The nature of the Church can then be comprehended from the standpoint of the Reformers as that group of persons called out of the world by Christ; defended and protected by him; sustained by the Word and Sacraments through the Spirit. As a matter of fact, there cannot be a Church without the proclamation of the Word of God; and unless the members are ingrafted into the Body by the Sacrament of Baptism and are nurtured by the Sacrament of the

Lord's Supper. Furthermore, there cannot be a Church unless there are ministers to proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments. This ministry testifies to the will of the only head of the Church until he returns. Where this ministry exists with its succession it shows forth the obedience of the Church to the command of Christ for the ongoing government and safekeeping of the Church and its ministry as long as it is in the world.

The Reformers understood the question of succession in terms of a 'preaching succession,' an unwavering faith in Jesus Christ, and 'without turning away from the purity of the Gospel.'¹⁴

The most normal sign of the Church is the sacred ministry.... This ministry accompanies the Church all through its history as an element which goes to make up its being.¹⁵

One can say, then, that Protestantism, based on the Reformation, can and must declare that the Church is not the creation of men and does not rest for its survival on man's ability to sustain it. God is the creator of the Church; He made his Son, Jesus Christ, the head of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ, his servant through whom he continues to work in the world. The early Church phraseology will be helpful at this point: 'where Christ is, there is the Church.' And to determine whether the Church exists or not, one has to determine if the Word of God is 'truly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered.'¹⁶

All Christians will agree on the following marks of the Church: that the Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. But each of them understands these symbols in his own particular manner. The Protestant understands these symbols as: the oneness of the Church is predicated on the oneness of Christ and that this unity remains in spite of what man does to it; that the claim to be made about the holiness of the Church is perhaps more outrageous than the claim about its unity – but holiness, too, must be understood as predicated on the holiness of Christ the head of the Church – even though the Church is composed of sinners. Catholicity may raise some problems due to a misunderstanding of the term. The Church is catholic and, therefore universal. Perhaps the most difficult symbol, among those denoting the Church and positing its marks for a

Protestant, is the term 'apostolic.' Here again the problem would arise from the confusion which has shrouded the term historically.

Apostolicity for the Protestant is based on the nature of the apostle's work and ministry. The apostle was a witness of and to the work of God in Christ. His apostolicity was contingent on his faithfulness in transmitting to others the apostolic witness. Apostolicity renders itself authentic when the Church, in turn, is faithful in transmitting and proclaiming the apostolic witness.

Fundamental to the Eastern vision of the Church is that the Church does not have a being independently of the component elements of her life. The Church is from an Eastern point of view

not an 'essence' or 'being' distinct as such, from God, man, and the world, but the very reality of Christ in us and us in Christ, a new mode of God's presence and action in His creation, of creation's life in God.¹⁷

This indicates that the basic nature of the Church is the sacramental union with Christ through the Holy spirit.

In Eastern Christian thought significant stress is placed on the descent of the Holy Spirit in the event of Pentecost. Thus, Pentecost is not viewed simply as the marking of the founding of an institution as such characterised by power and authority, but as 'the inauguration of the new age, the beginning of life eternal, the revelation of the kingdom.' Moreover, the Church is viewed as the 'continuing presence of Pentecost' having the power to sanctify and change life. The Church, properly understood, is 'creation renewed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy spirit.'¹⁸

The Holy Spirit, the renewer and sanctifier of creation realises 'the communion between God and man through the grace given in Christ; and the communion between men in the ecclesia.' And when the Spirit acts, he does so with the Father and the Son, but in and through his action within the ecclesia the love of the Father becomes known and the grace of the Son is given. The action of the Holy Spirit

creates a personal-corporate reality, the *ecclesia-koinonia*. This is one necessary, absolutely vital channel for communicating this truth; and this channel is the grace of reconciliation between God and man. The Holy Spirit is the realized personal union in the Trinity and the force of unity in the ecclesia.¹⁹

However, the nature of the Church as institution is not denied by Eastern ecclesiology. It is rather affirmed because it represents and stands for all mankind as it declares to the world 'the meaning of creation as fulfilment in Christ, announces to the world its end and the inauguration of the Kingdom.' The institution becomes the sacrament of the Kingdom, and the process by which the Church realises itself as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, the body of Christ, and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The means through which the Church realizes itself is the Eucharist, 'the sacrament in which the Church performs the passage, the passover, from this world into the Kingdom.'²⁰

In order that we may understand more clearly the ecclesiologies of the three Protestant churches under study, we need to see the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology as represented in the Reformed-Protestant background and the Eastern heritage respectively.

Western Church thought gave a more prominent role to Christology in its ecclesiological understanding even though we noticed in the Reformed confessional statements quoted at the outset reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in the ecclesia. But that role is clearly subservient to the role of Christ in calling out persons from the world to form his body; while the Eastern heritage which these three Protestant churches share in gives prominence to pneumatology to the extent that it can be said

the pneumatological incorporates the christological event and together they reveal the love of the Father. The pneumatological transubstantiates the christological and, as we receive the power of Pentecost, everything is transformed in all of us, making the christological remembrance of the simple historical event in Jesus a real representation in the ecclesia among us. The Word of God which once incarnate becomes thus spoken; it becomes the flame of fire for new life together with God and men.²¹

These two patterns of thought were at work in the formulation of the ecclesiological understanding of Near Eastern Protestantism. One influence was direct and conscious and the other indirect and unconscious. The influence of Western Christian thought is more readily detectible inasmuch direct adaptations of already formalised statements on ecclesiology and at times whole confessions of faith were appropriated. And as for the Eastern influence it was more subtle and can perhaps be detected through certain forms of

spirituality rather than through the adoption of already worked out patterns of Eastern Christian thought, and through the role assigned to the pastor and the light through which the whole concept of ministry is seen. The role of the pastor in Eastern Protestantism is not very dissimilar from that assigned to the Bishop in the Eastern Churches. The pastor-bishop is the one who safeguards the purity of doctrine and the unity of the Church through the administration of the sacraments and the ruling of the church.²²

The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon defines the Church both theologically and constitutionally. The theological-ecclesiological statement says: 'The Church is the body of Christ and he is her only head.'²³ The definition reflects the basic ground understanding of the Church which any one particular Church can and does make. No specific ecclesiological tradition evinces itself through this declaration. It rather points to the simplicity and lack of sophistication with which theological questions are treated. It also points out that at the time of the writing of this statement the Synod was more a sect-type than a church-type.

However, beyond the written statement concerning the nature of the Church which we find in the Constitution of the Synod, the actual teaching mirrors a Reformed-Protestant tradition inasmuch as it treats the subject in traditional Reformed-Protestant symbols. Thus, the Church is viewed as existing where the Word is preached and the sacraments duly administered. Added to this 'oral tradition' was the action taken by the Synod in 1969 when the Heidelberg Catechism was adopted as a standard for faith and doctrine.²⁴

The adoption of the Heidelberg Catechism represents a reaffirmation of Reformed teaching and indicates that the Synod now views itself as standing squarely within the family of Reformed churches. Another is the Synod's membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

In addition to the confessional stand, there is a legal definition of the Church. The legal definition is in conformity with Lebanese *confessionalisme*, the successor of the *millet* system. It reads:

The Church is an organized group of Evangelicals organized by the Synod and given its legal existence to practice worship and the administration of its affairs within the structures of this Constitution and the special order pertinent to the religious evangelical presbyterian doctrine.²⁵

The key words here are: 'organized group of Evangelicals,' and 'religious evangelical presbyterian doctrine.' The first expression is a legal one connoting membership in a recognised religious community in Lebanon and Syria. This is in conformity with the socio-religious pattern of *confessionalisme* in both of these countries. And the expression 'religious evangelical presbyterian doctrine' reflects the simplicity and lack of sophistication with which theological issues are treated as well as an admixture of conventionally accepted legal terminology which satisfy the governments within whose bounds the Synod exists.

In the Synod a particular church is organised according to the following ruling:

If a group of active resident evangelicals whose number is not less than thirty wished to form a new organized church, they have to submit a signed application to the Synod or the Administrative Council pledging to bear what responsibilities fall on them. If the Synod accepts and approves the application, it will appoint an organizing committee for that church and the ordination of elders for it.²⁶

From this statements one may infer a number of matters. First, that the Synod says, though not directly, that it is not interested in the business of proselytising.²⁷ The Synod restricts the founding of new churches to the adherents of the Evangelical faith and to the members of the Evangelical community; that is to those who belong to the community by birth. Second, that the Synod is the body with authority to organise churches. And third, it indicates the form of government upheld by the Synod as being presbyterial.

As for membership in the Synod churches, the Constitution declares:

Sons and daughters of evangelical affiliation are accepted in the membership of the church after their examination before the session as to their beliefs and behavior. They shall have voting rights upon the completion of eighteen years of age.²⁸

The formula 'sons and daughters' is Calvinistic in its origins, but when qualified by the term 'evangelical affiliation', it becomes an acceptable criterion for membership in the church in relation to the social structures of Lebanese-Syrian *confessionalisme* and, therefore, carries no offence in it to those of other confessions. Even when an Evangelical man marries a non-Evangelical Christian, she changes

her religious affiliation to conform with that of her husband. How much more should the children follow their father's religion in an essentially patriarchal society? Also this formula denotes who qualifies for membership; and the term 'evangelical affiliation' – in this context – is equivalent to the term believers in similar formulas. Regarding the requirement of examination before the session as to belief and behaviour, there is embedded in it the Reformed tradition and the type of pietism reflected in the missionary attitudes of the last century.

Another criterion for membership in the churches of the Synod pertains to non-evangelicals. It states:

If a non-evangelical adult desires entry into church membership, he shall be examined by its session with regard to beliefs, sincerity, spiritual knowledge, and Christian conduct. If the session sustains him, his name shall be moved from the records of his original community to the records of the Evangelical community.²⁹

Provision is made here for the addition of members on the grounds of a confession of faith and the close examination by the session of the church. The submission to an examination by the session is in accord with the ruling for the 'sons and daughters,' but the examination of the non-evangelical is stricter than that prescribed for the 'sons and daughters.' This is due partly to the desire to make sure that those who come from other backgrounds are genuinely convinced of the Evangelical faith and partly to pay respect to the existing system of religious *confessionalisme* which recognises each religious group as a socio-religious community.

The order of ministry within the bounds of the Synod follows the traditionally accepted norms of the Reformed-Protestant background. Ministry is relegated to teaching elders, licensed preachers, and ruling elders. Ministers or teaching elders are defined as follows:

Those set apart by official ordination in accordance with the special order relevant to the evangelical presbyterian doctrine for the shepherding of the churches; the serving of the Gospel of Christ; and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and the officiating at weddings.³⁰

The role of minister is clearly defined to deal with the shepherding of churches (pastor-bishop); preaching and teaching; and the administration of the sacraments. This is in harmony with the role of

the pastor-bishop of the Reformed tradition. But as for the role of the minister in connection with the officiating at weddings, it reflects both the remnants of Eastern Church thought which views marriage as a sacrament and the fulfilment of the legal requirement that marriage can only be performed by a duly ordained clergyman. This, of course, is rooted in the Eastern tradition and religious heritage which influenced the writing of the laws pertaining to this issue.

A second level of ministry is that of the licensed preacher of whom the Constitution of the Synod says:

Regular licensed preachers are those who received a preaching license from the Synod and who serve under its administration. All that is required of ministers is required of licensed preachers except the administration of the two sacraments and the officiating at weddings.³¹

As originally conceived, this category of ministry was not supposed to constitute a second level, but as it has worked out, in effect, the licensed preacher turns out to be on a lower level than the ordained. The sociological view of the bishop was rejected by the Reformers; but in Lebanon where the native Christians had not rebelled against their own church heritage and where the Reformation came through the back door, through revivalist missionaries, it appears that the ordained clergy look at themselves in terms of pastor-bishop theologically and the pastor-bishop sociologically.

The intention of having licentiates was – as in many Reformed churches – to try them out and experience their Christian life, character, and leadership abilities. But in the case of the Synod licentiates they have for the most part become akin to the 'village priest' who is not educated adequately; who agrees to serve remote small churches, while the 'metropolitan bishops' remain in the city; yet, unlike the 'village priest' the licensed preacher may not administer the sacraments nor officiate at weddings.

The counterpart of the teaching elder is the ruling elder. He is defined as:

The member of the church whose life is attested to with regard to piety and good conduct and who is elected by the church to be a member in its session and who is ordained according to the special order of evangelical presbyterian doctrine.³²

This category of ministry reflects the ecclesiological interpretations of the Reformed tradition and those who hold the presbyterian form of government. The function of the ruling elder is – as a member of the session – to participate in the governing and ordering of the spiritual affairs of the particular church.

Finally, the Synod has ordered that life in its churches be governed by a discipline. The section dealing with discipline is brief but to the point. It does not have an elaborate system worked out and can be summed up by the following statements:

The purpose of discipline is the safeguarding of the Church, its unity, and the welfare of the offender. Church discipline is comprised of warning, rebuke, suspension of the rights of membership for a period not to exceed five years.³³

The Synod represents essentially a Reformed-Protestant tradition. Any pietism that may have characterised the Synod as a result of the direct contact with American missionaries in the past has for the most part disappeared. Actual practice does not indicate much pietistic patterns of behaviour in force. What remnants of it that exist are among the pastors or licentiates who are graduates of Bible schools or those who came from Egypt.³⁴

A significant difference between the Synod and the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East lies in the area of pietism and stricter church discipline.

The Union accepts the traditional formula defining the church: that it exists where the Word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered. But as can be seen from the question to which a candidate for communicant membership has to make answer, the Church is not a given or an objective reality there in society to which the individual can relate, but it is that group of people who covenant to form a church confessing a common faith. The question reads:

You believe that any number of believers, duly organized constitute a church of Christ, of which Christ is the only head; and that the only sacraments of Christ are Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the former being the seal of the covenant and a sign of the purifying operation of the Holy Spirit, and the token of admission into the visible church; and the latter, in showing forth by visible symbols the death of Christ, being a perpetual memento of his

atoning love, and a pledge of union and communion with him and with all true believers?³⁵

The content of this question points to the fact that the Church is an organisation of believers who have covenanted to form a church. The centrality of organisation lies in the local congregation rather than in a synod or a presbytery. The emphasis here is on believers and those holding to the true faith. Recent developments in the Union have made the specification for a duly organised church in terms of membership to be at least ten and not as the statement above indicates – any number.

In the preamble to the Constitution of the Union we find the following formulation depicting the nature of the Church:

The Church is the creation of God who brought it into being; it is different from other human organizations inasmuch as it is God who gives it life. She is brought to life by the strength of Christ's life and resurrection. She has no head other than Christ; no Lord other than Christ. She is Christ's body.³⁶

Any group of true believers, but not less than ten, of those who have subscribed to and taken the pledge of faith, may apply to the Union for approval for the organisation of a new church. If the Union finds their application reasonable and that there is not another Church of the Union with which they can unite, then the Union will take their case to a special committee which will examine the Christian life of the applicants and their economic ability to support a church. When these conditions are fulfilled, the Union will authorise the organisation of the new congregation.³⁷

The Union distinguishes two types of Evangelicals. The first is the Armenian Evangelical who is born into the community; while the second is the true-believer communicant member. Before any individual becomes a communicant, he submits himself to a very close scrutiny by the session of the Church.

Candidates for admission to communion shall be carefully examined as to their knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel and their personal piety by the standing committee or church session; and if the result of the examination, and of a sufficient observation of the lives of the individuals, be such as to afford satisfactory evidence of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus

Christ, implying a new heart, they shall be proposed by the pastor, at a regular meeting of the church, at least two weeks previous to communion, and the male members shall be called upon to vote on the question of their admission.³⁸

This ruling still stands except that all communicant members – male and female – are called upon to vote on the question of admission. From conversation with some pastors there seems to be some relaxation of this very stringent rule. However, personal piety and evidence of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ must still be recognised in the applicant for communicant membership before his name is proposed to the church.

The ecclesiology of the Union points to the typical Western oriented forms of the understanding of the Church wherein christology is the ground principle. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Church is in the sphere of the hearts of men; to convict them of their sin; and to inflame their hearts with zeal for the Lord and move them toward repentance.³⁹

Missionary pietistic attitudes are reflected sharply in the churches of the Union. It seems that this form of pietism has found fertile soil – at least among those who are in positions of leadership – if not among the majority of the community. Eastern spirituality and Eastern tendencies toward the mystical form of the Christian life have provided a receptive medium for the forms of piety found in the churches of the Union.

The order of ministry adopted by the churches of the Union takes the pattern of the accepted forms within the framework of the Reformed-Protestant tradition. There are pastor-bishops, licentiates, and deacons. The role of the pastor-bishop centres around the preaching of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments, presiding over and overseeing the affairs of the church and the confirmation of communicant members. In addition to these responsibilities, he can officiate at weddings and funerals.

The licensed preacher is a seminary graduate in preparation for ordination. The licentiate period is also viewed as a tryout and an experience of the personal Christian life and commitment of the candidate. He is authorised to do all that is expected of the pastor-

bishop except the administering of the sacraments, the confirmation of new members, and officiating at weddings – the last being in conformity with the requirements of the laws of Lebanon and Syria.

Provision is made in the Constitution of the Union for deacons to participate with the pastor in governing the affairs of the church. Deacons are those persons whose life is attested to in respect to faith, piety, and good conduct and who are ordained to this office for the welfare of the church. The board of deacons is headed by the pastor to form the council of the local church.⁴⁰

Discipline is strictly maintained for the safeguarding of the purity of the church and the welfare of the offender. The forms of discipline range from warning and rebuke to suspension and excommunication.

Although the form of government of the Union is congregational, it is clear from the record that there is not a great difference between the Union and the Synod in their actual manner of operation even though the Synod claims to be presbyterian. The Union's government in practice approaches more the presbyterian form and the Synod tends toward the episcopal form although it is distinctly presbyterian in other respects.

The third Near Eastern Protestant Church, the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, exhibits similarities to both the Synod and the Union as well as marked differences in polity and the nature of the Church.

The Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church accepts the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion as the basic statement of faith together with the ancient creeds of the Church. Its ecclesiological structures stem from the English Reformation. The 'Thirty Nine Articles of Religion' define the Church as:

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.⁴¹

However, the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church is not without its own statements about the Church and about the order in the Church. Thus the Constitution defines the Church as:

any number of Christian persons organized according to specific rules in harmony with this Constitution and who meet for the purpose of prayer in one place and who use the Book of Common Prayer in their worship.⁴²

This statement makes manifest that the Church as institution exists in society objectively; it is not the covenanting of individual believers who come together and form a church. Authority does not centre in the group of believers who voluntarily come together to be a church. Authority for the formation of a congregation rests in the Episcopal Council. Furthermore, this statement presents another mark of the church, namely, the use of the Book of Common Prayer, in public worship.

From the point of view of Episcopal ecclesiology the Church exists in historic apostolic succession in an objective manner and as a given in society. And in this particular Episcopal Church, it is the Episcopal Council which regularises the existence of any particular congregation.

The council shall consider by means of a vote that a congregation has been formed in accordance with this Constitution when the number of its members who are communicants has reached six or more.⁴³

The criteria for membership in the Episcopal Church are clearly stated:

Every baptized person wishing to belong to the membership of any of the congregations has to submit an application to the pastoral session.... The pastoral session has to take into consideration the doctrines and rules of the Church when considering any application and it is its prerogative to accept or reject such an application.⁴⁴

Even though the pastoral session considers the applications for communicant membership, it is the bishop who alone has the authority to confirm new members. He can and does delegate the responsibility of confirmation to parish priests.

Ministry in the Episcopal Church attempts to harmonise the historic apostolic succession with the 'preaching succession' as understood by the Reformation. Emphasis is therefore placed on the role of the bishop inasmuch as it is he who safeguards the purity of

the Church through the oversight he exercises over his congregations. The purity of the preaching ministry and the due ministration of the sacraments are also guarded by the bishop; he judges the purity of the preaching and the due ministration of the sacraments since he is endowed with the historic apostolic succession.

The basic form of ministry, then, can be said to centre on the bishop who delegates specific responsibilities to priests and deacons. But it is the bishop who oversees the whole life of the Church. Priests and deacons look after the life of the local church on the grounds of the delegated responsibility given them by the bishop.

The influence of the Church Missionary Society and the Church of England is clearly evident in the life and form of the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church. The form which the Church has taken is basically in harmony with the Eastern background of the people – particularly in relation to church government and liturgy. This form of the Church found a responsive cultural milieu, for it reflected a familiar and meaningful organisation; and the retention of the liturgical patterns in worship has appealed to the liturgically rooted Eastern Christians. The bishop properly represents the centre of authority; he is very much like the father in the extended family.

Evaluation and a possible basis for ecumenical dialogue

The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, though presbyterian, tends toward the episcopal form; the union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, though congregational, leans more toward the presbyterian form; and the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, though episcopal, practises in its Episcopal Council a form of government very similar to that of the presbyterian churches. In the Episcopal Council the bishop is clearly a genuine moderator. None of the above churches rejects their claimed ecclesiologies.

One possible means of understanding what is happening is the family model constructed at the outset of this chapter. The Levantine family today has become nuclearised, yet it has not rejected the essential characteristics of the extended family. Although married sons do not live in the homes of their fathers, they maintain a very close relationship with their fathers as well as with the rest of their families.

The introduction of the automobile has facilitated this phenomenon. A young married man may have an apartment for himself, his wife and children in the major city of the region where he works, but when the weekend comes, he will say: 'Let us go home.' His family will understand exactly what he means and will pack for the weekend. This is a regular weekly routine.

The nuclear family, as it exists today in the Levant, is much like the local congregation in the presbyterian system of church government. And the extended family is much like the presbytery. One can see a very obvious connectional form of family relations. The one-man rule of the father is gradually disappearing especially in the more developed parts of the Near East. As M. K. Nahas puts it, 'the desire for independence of the new generation and the increasing education... in some countries is beginning to limit this one-man authority.'⁴⁵ Economic development and industrialisation have contributed to further change in the structure of the family.

Married children together with their father have become the structure through which vital questions relative to the whole extended family are decided. They are decided on the weekend gatherings of the whole family. The independence which the married children seek is not one which breaks relations with the rest of the extended family, but one in which each nuclear family is accorded its rights and privileges in relation to the others. All together constitute the governing body.

Our thesis is that ecclesiological forms are predicates of family forms and structures. Wisely, the ancient churches of the East adopted for the government of the church the patterns then prevailing in family structures. Prematurely the American Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth century imposed a form of

government for the newly created Protestant Church which was completely alien to the people of the Levant. The time was not ripe for that form – neither in its Presbyterian nor Congregational manifestation.

But with the change which has come upon the structure of the family in the Levant today, and most especially in Lebanon, due to education and a fair measure of economic development, the Presbyterian form of Church government has become the more desirable one. Wisely did the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon reject the proposed episcopal form of government in the consultation on Protestant Church union recently.⁴⁶

Possibilities for ecumenical relations

This analysis has implications for ecumenical relations beyond the Protestant Churches in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. The current ecumenical openness which we are experiencing requires of us to take a critical look at ourselves in an attempt to better understand our churches particularly as they relate to the whole body of Christ. With this in mind we shall look at some relevant questions as understood by the three Protestant churches under study. It is hoped that the answers to these questions will further ecumenical dialogue. The first question treats the nature of the Church; the second, authority in the Church; and the third, the task of the Church in a world characterised by sociological fragmentation and alienation.

In the statements of faith which are accepted by the three churches we find a common feature in them all: that the Church exists where the Word of God is preached and where the sacraments are duly administered. This is the Reformed position. But there are other characteristics which can open the doors for dialogue with other churches in the Near East, namely, the socio-ecclesiological traits we have discussed and the common bond of ancient creed and heritage.

However, there is a clearly distinct difference between the Eastern Churches' look at ecclesiological questions and our

Protestant Churches. Insofar as the Near Eastern Protestant Churches are Near Eastern more by nationality and geography and Western by theology and ecclesiology, christology has played – and still does – a significant role. 'Every formulation of a doctrine of the Church depends upon and implies a Christological foundation.'⁴⁷ This indicates and points to a rift in ecclesiological understanding between the Near Eastern Protestants and the Eastern Churches.

Ecclesiology for the Eastern Churches is pneumatologically grounded.

The chosen people of God, passing through the Body of Christ, now becomes the koinonia of the Holy Spirit. The flesh of the Son of Man reveals now its expiatory grace and becomes the omnipresent Spirit.⁴⁸

The pentecostal event continues to manifest itself in the Church, and it is the Spirit who makes the Church the Church.

This rift can be narrowed down. Nissiotis suggests possible grounds for this when he says: 'The pneumatological Pentecost is Christological.' This is so since the fellowship between God and man which the event of Pentecost cemented is 'realized in Jesus.' The ascension of the Son made possible the descent of the Spirit.⁴⁹

Another opportunity for dialogue is the common confession of faith through the ancient creeds – that the Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The oneness, the holiness, and the catholicity of the Church can be more readily agreed upon than is the question of apostolicity. For apostolicity touches upon the very critical issue of authority, and continuity. The question of continuity and authority can be best approached when churches in dialogue aimed at re-union keep in mind the values of the relationship between apostolic continuity and faith-obedience continuity.

The need for the horizontal, visible continuity of witness to intersect with the vertical, the event of faith to which the witness points is recognized in the statement of II Timothy: The pattern of sound words can be followed only "in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus;" the truth entrusted can be guarded only "by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us." Horizontal continuity is indispensable, for there is a story with a definite pattern that has to be told; but the vertical event is the point of the story.⁵⁰

The Reformers did not reject the theological understanding of the episcopacy in terms of continuity in the Church, but rather rejected its sociological nature. They identified the 'presbyterial ministry... with the episcopal ministry.'⁵¹

This leads directly to the question of authority. Since succession in Reformed understanding denotes a 'preaching succession' and a faithfulness to the teachings of the Scriptures and the doctrines found in the ancient creeds, the question of authority must be approached from this perspective.

The Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church seems to have made a happy harmony between the 'preaching succession' – as evidenced by their insistence through the affirmations about the Church in the 'Thirty Nine Articles of Religion' that the Church is: 'where the Word of God is preached and the sacraments duly ministered,' on the one hand and still claims the historic succession on the other. Here one can see the intersection of historic horizontal continuity with the vertical faith-obedience continuity.

But when the Church is viewed merely as the covenanting of true believers, of when its continuity is contingent on historic horizontal succession, two dangers emerge. In the first instance, the Church will have a subjective reality dependent on the experiential level of the believers. And in the second, the Church has an objective reality which may be devoid of experience. Both lead into a misunderstanding of the nature of the Church. Also when the Church, as in the case of the Synod, is made up of members of a particular community as such, it loses its missionary drive – a vital characteristic of the Church.

The nature of the Church must be viewed from the perspective of the tension which must be held between the subjective-objective character of the Church's being. When these are held in tension, there will result a proper understanding of the missiology of the ecclesia and the ecclesiology of mission. Our sources for this understanding are the Scriptures and the creedal positions which have drawn on the Scriptures. Faithfulness to these sources will prove its usefulness in allowing the Church to express its concern for society.

A divided Church cannot be taken too seriously by the world. The Levantine Christians share a common background, a common culture, and a common Christian heritage. They must, therefore, if they wish to be honestly faithful to their Lord, seek more effective dialogue leading towards re-union, and expressing the true nature of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church which they all are.

Footnotes

- 1 A notable example of this phenomenon is that of the Eastern Uniate Churches which permit a married clergy.
- 2 Baal is the central figure in the Ugaritic texts, particularly after his confrontation with El, and the shifting of 'supreme authority' to him. A familiar title for the husband in the Arab world is Baal. A woman may refer to her husband as *Baali* (my husband). For an explication of the shifting of authority from El to Baal see Julian Obermann, *Ugaritic Mythology, A Study of Its Leading Motifs*, Yale University Press, 1948, p. 83.
- 3 C.A.O. Nieuwenhuijze, *Sociology of the Middle East: A Stock-Taking and Interpretation*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1971, p. 385.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 384.
- 5 Ephesians 5:22ff.
- 6 I Timothy 3:1ff and Titus 1:5ff.
- 7 Nieuwenhuijze, *op. cit.*, p. 536.
- 8 Philip Wheelwright, 'The Archetypal Symbol,' *Perspectives in Literary Symbolism*, edited by Joseph Strelka, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968, p. 218.
- 9 Nieuwenhuijze, *op. cit.*, p. 536.
- 10 John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches, A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, Doubleday, New York, 1963, p. 141.
- 11 *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1957, p. 44.
- 12 Leith, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 273.
- 14 J. J. von Allmen, 'The Continuity of the Church According to Reformed Teaching,' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, I (1964), p.p. 429-431.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 436.
- 16 Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1961, pp. 98-99.
- 17 Alexander Schmemmann, 'Ecclesiological Notes,' *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, XI (1967), p. 35.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 19 Nikos A. Nissiotis, 'Spirit, Church, and Ministry,' *Theology Today*, XIX (1963), 486.
- 20 Schmemmann, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- 21 Nissiotis, *op. cit.*, p. 488.
- 22 Schmemmann makes a special point of the role of the Church in the preservation of the purity and unity of the Church through the proper administration of the Eucharist; note p. 38.
- 23 *Constitution of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon*, Confessional Statement, Chapter 1, Article 4, author's translation.
- 24 I shared the special committee of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon which was responsible for the work which led to the adoption of the Heidelberg Catechism as a standard of faith. Up until 1969, the Synod had only references to 'evangelical presbyterian doctrine.' However, we could not find any content to this expression anywhere. Therefore, at my urging the Synod created the Committee on the Creeds of the Church. It is our hope that through this committee, the Synod will formulate an up-to-date statement of faith relevant to the situation of the Church in the Middle East today.
- 25 *Const. of National Evangelical Synod*, *op. cit.*, Article 8, Section 27.
- 26 *Ibid.*, By-Laws, Chapter 6, Section 1, Article 43.
- 27 'Proselytism is not something absolutely different from witness; it is the corruption of witness,' *The Ecumenical Review*, IX (1956), p. 4. Enough proselytism took place in the formation of the Protestant Churches in the Near East in the first place.
- 28 *Const. of National Evangelical Synod*, *op. cit.*, By-Laws, Chapter 6, Section 2, Article 46.
- 29 *Ibid.*, Chapter 8, Section 4, Article 31.
- 30 *Ibid.*, Chapter 9, Section 1, Article 33.
- 31 *Ibid.*, Chapter 9, Section 2, Articles 34-35.
- 32 *Ibid.*, Chapter 9, Section 2, Article 37.
- 33 *Ibid.*, By-Laws, Chapter 7, Article 69.

- 34 Egyptian Evangelicalism differs from that of Lebanon and Syria in two respects. The parent Mission was the United Presbyterian Church in North America which was more conservative than the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions or its successor the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The character of the Egyptian also differs from that of the Levantine. Personal observation indicates an inclination to pietism which is absent from the Syrian-Lebanese mentality.
- 35 Peter Kawerau, *Amerika und die Orientalischen Kirchen*, Walter De Gruyter & Co., Berlin, 1958, p. 636.
- 36 *Constitution of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East*, Preamble. I was assisted by two students and one member of the faculty of the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon, who are Armenians, with the language.
- 37 *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.
- 38 Kawerau, *op. cit.*, p. 634.
- 39 John 16:8-9.
- 40 This understanding is based on conversations with the Rev. Hovhannes P. Aharonian, President of the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon and head of the Armenian Union.
- 41 Leith, *op. cit.*, 273.
- 42 *Constitution of the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church*, n.p. given, author's translation.
- 43 *Ibid.*, n.p.
- 44 *Ibid.*, n.p.
- 45 M. K. Nahas, 'The Family in the Arab World,' *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*, edited by Ailon Shiloh, Random House, New York, p. 240.
- 46 A letter from the Rev. Ibrahim M. Dagher, Executive of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, dated 5 December, 1972, states: 'As per your request enclosed are the minutes of the committee on union and a copy of the proposed constitution, namely, the episcopal; and, inasmuch as the Synod has insisted on its presbyterian form, discussions on union have been postponed till a later time,' authors translation.
- 47 Geddes MacGregor, *Corpus Christi*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1958, p. 110.
- 48 Nissiotis, *op. cit.*, 488.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 488-489.
- 50 Collin W. Williams, *The Church, New Directions in Theology Today*, Vol. IV, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1968, p. 77.
- 51 Von Allmen, *op. cit.*, 440.

Chapter 6

Proposal for an ecclesiological reconstruction

Man works out the religious forms which best express his ultimate concerns. These forms do not come to him from outside his collective socio-religious experience; rather, they are the direct consequence of the socio-religious processes which are in operation in his society. They are, thus, culturally, historically, and religiously conditioned; and belong to the whole group.¹

The manner in which these forms are created is comprised of three major steps.² In the first place, man externalises what he believes, gives it form, and rationalises both content and form. Rationalisation, it must be recalled, is the intellectualisation of the content as well as the form in which belief is cast.³

As belief is given form, rationalised, and externalised, it acquires an objective ontic being, as Durkheim suggests; it becomes a social fact. And the chief characteristic of the social fact is its ability to act upon man coercively, and to shape his patterns of behaviour as well as the manner in which he institutionalises them. Furthermore, the rationalised, objectified social facts are internalised and routinised. When this process takes place, the social facts will become even more powerful than they already are. Man, then, appropriates them and makes them his own – hence, their even more powerful normative force on him.

Institutionalisation is the organisation of cultural and religious forms into a coherent structure which can offer man meaning, belonging, and an orderly avenue for action. If institutions are to

survive and flourish, they must, then, reflect the cultural patterns of organisation of the society in which they exist. Otherwise such institutions would be in jeopardy; they would either be drastically changed, or even totally rejected.

It must be pointed out, however, that religious institutions are distinguished from others insofar as they have a 'transcendental... focus.'⁴ This is especially true of the historic religions. In such cases 'religion becomes a separate institution distinguished from the society as a whole.'⁵ But it must maintain a correlative relation with society if continuity is to be safeguarded.

For instance, a parish, a diocese, a presbytery, an association, or a synod is not

the creation of Jesus Christ, nor of the apostle Paul... It is an ecclesiastical organization which is created in relation to the degree of the needs and in view of certain needs, and which is adapted to these needs.⁶

In other words, these ecclesiastical institutions are created for the specific purpose of meeting well defined needs. These needs are the children of the social, historical, political, and economic situation. And as Friedrich Furstenberg puts it

The Church as social institution – by which its true character shall not at all be described – has experienced many changes which reflect its relationship to the world, i.e. to society, in which it is always embedded.⁷

Therefore, the structure of religious institutions must not only be based on the needs of the specific society in which they are to function, but also must mirror or reflect the organisational structures of that society.

Obviously one might raise the question of tradition and its place in relation to ecclesiastical institutions. Tradition – it must be noted, whether that which was canonised into Scriptures, or that which stands alongside the Scriptures as the living reflection of the people of God on the salvific work of God in Christ – is not free from cultural and historical conditioning as well as structural organisational mirroring or reflection. In this light we can suggest along with Ruef that

the function of tradition is to express the continuity of God's action in history through the creation of a peculiar people. It cannot be a guarantee of this continuity as the brokenness of Christ's body attests... the *direction* of ecumenical discussions should be directed at finding, not a common *expression* of tradition, but a common consensus as to the identity and function of that which is to be continued, namely the People of God.⁸

If, for example, we attempt to suggest that tradition has acted as a guarantee of structural uniformity within the Catholic Church on a world-wide scale, we have to only remember the cultural imposition of organisational structures and values employed by Catholic missionaries. Furthermore, we have to remember that

a truly incarnational approach to other cultures had been common enough in former times: during the period of the Church's missionary expansion among the peoples of the West. It could not have been otherwise in the beginning. The apostles in their efforts to make the Christian message intelligible and relevant among the nations, could not have invented new socio-cultural forms any more than they could have invented a new language. There is no universal Christian culture, and every human act is conditioned by a particular culture.⁹

However, we must keep in mind that when structures or meaning systems – even if imposed – persist for a sufficiently long period of time, they will be internalised and appropriated – at least partially if not wholly, or in an adapted manner.

Our concern is the Lebanese-Syrian culture and that of New England of the early to mid nineteenth century. Sidney Mead offers a perceptive comparison between the American, 'this new man,' and the peoples of older cultures. The inferences and conclusions which may be drawn from this comparison will serve to illustrate and shed light upon the question of compatibility with culture.

Americans have never had time to spare. What they did have during all their formative years was space – organic pragmatic space – the space of action. And perhaps this made the real difference in the formation of 'this new man.' From time immemorial the peoples of the Orient, of the Near East, and of Europe have been people hemmed in, confined within the spatial boundaries set by geography and the closely related boundaries set by tradition and custom.¹⁰

Unlike the American 'new man,' the Lebanese-Syrian of the first half of the nineteenth century had nothing but 'time to spare.' Mead is right. The peoples of other cultures were hemmed in by their geographic location and boundaries as well as by their tradition and custom.

The American Protestant missionaries had presumed two things: first, that their culture was superior, and, second, that their theological understanding was also inherently superior and more pragmatic than the 'antiquated' creedal orthodoxy and historical consistency of the Eastern Christians.

In the preceding chapter we proposed the thesis that, historically, the Church as an institution has usually been predicated on the structure and organisation of the family. Freud offers credence to this thesis when he says:

It is not without a profound reason that there is an insistence on the analogy between the Christian community and a family, and that the faithful consider themselves brothers, that is, brothers by the love which Christ feels for them. It is incontestable that the bond which unites each individual to Christ is the cause of the bond which unites each individual to all others.¹¹

Elizabeth Nottingham further clarifies our point. Two levels of conceiving of religion must be discerned. On the one hand, religion must be understood as 'an individual's relation to God and the ultimate objects of his faith,' and 'as a human institution,' on the other. And insofar as 'institutional religion is human, it is subject to all the considerations that limit human organisation in general.'¹²

In order to better understand the clash between the Lebanese-Syrians and the American Protestant missionaries of the first half of last century, we shall seek a clearer vision of another social fact, the family, which shaped and moulded the patterns of behaviour of both parties.

Had the century of Protestant mission been the late seventeenth or even the eighteenth, the clash would have been minimal and probably would have gone unnoticed. At that stage both societies followed closely the patriarchal forms of family organisation. According to Bernard Bailyn 'the most important agency in the

transfer of culture [in colonial America] was not formal institutions of instruction or public instruments of communication, but the family.'¹³ But the great century of mission for Protestants was the nineteenth, and by then the structure of the family had radically changed in America, yet had remained for the most part the same in Syria and Lebanon.

The experience of frontier life was compounded by the strong influence of the industrial revolution and together helped nuclearise the extended family. The expansive space, of which Sidney Mead speaks, prevented easy communication and gave additional rationale for the nuclearised family. Each unit had to depend on itself and succeed without any benefit or help from the other members of the extended family.

But in Lebanon and Syria, as in most of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, space was limited and industrialisation was hardly a factor yet. In that kind of a cultural milieu 'the extended kinship or family lineage groups had important functions for the survival and maintenance of the individual and the group,'¹⁴ and the relationship, belonging, and participation of the individual to and in the group constituted his *raison d'être*. 'Family and religious collectivity constituted the major structures within which an individual lived out his life.' And to a great extent

political, economic, educational, welfare and religious functions were performed through the structure of the extended kinship units or lineages. Relations between kin members were institutionalized with the obligations and rights fairly well delineated.¹⁵

Into this cultural setting, the American Protestant missionaries introduced a church form, the presbyterian, which was a reflection of a nuclearised family structure, but in which the nuclear units had not severed relations one to the other, or to the larger extended family.

Palestine in the nineteenth century did not differ substantially in its cultural and family organisational patterns from Syria and Lebanon. Here, the Church Missionary Society, the missionary arm of the Church of England, introduced the episcopal form of Church government. The episcopal form and organisation was by far the

more compatible with the structure and organisation of the family in the Levant. Thus, the Palestinian Christians accepted this form of Church organisation more readily and found it familiar and, therefore, more comfortable than did their neighbours to the north find the presbyterian form.

The incompatible, we have pointed out, may become compatible due to the fact that culture is not static, but dynamic and changing. In our day the presbyterian form has become the more desirable in view of the fact that the Syrian-Lebanese society itself has changed and its family structure has become nuclearised yet maintaining a clear connection with the extended family. The father has not lost all his authority; he still carries a significant weight in the decision-making processes.

The role of scripture and tradition in ecclesiology

The literary-historical critical revolution of the nineteenth century radicalised modern man's approach to the study of Scripture. Through it, the student of Scripture came to regard the cultural, historical, and social situation of the writer as well as of his reader, as valid criteria for the proper understanding of the texts. Thanks to this literary-historical revolution, Christians, who had subscribed to a literal doctrine of inspiration akin to that of Islam,¹⁶ have come to realise that man contributed significantly to the composition of the Scriptures; using his myths and symbols to make the message intelligible.¹⁷

In the light of this new understanding, 'the task of exegesis is undoubtedly to understand and expound... what the biblical authors were saying, in the language and forms of thought of their own time, to their contemporaries.'¹⁸ As such, then, exegesis becomes responsible for unveiling that which is of a purely cultural nature by distinguishing the form from the substance of the message which was intended initially by the writer. The corollary for this

attempt to unveil that which is of a purely cultural nature is the necessity of understanding the cultural, and historical situation of the place in which the writing took place, the *Sitz im Leben*.

Scripture cannot be set apart from the whole of the Christian tradition. Scripture itself is a composite of several early traditions and is part and parcel of the whole active response of man to God's revelation and to his action in his Son Jesus Christ. The apostolic message announced to humanity 'a historic event' which took place in a specific time in history, 'under Pontius Pilate,' and in a particular cultural-social situation. Meyendorff maintains that

the essential meaning of the New Testament supposes that Christ's redemptive act has been completed once and for all, that nothing can be added to it and that there is no other way of benefiting from it but by hearing the Word of God proclaimed by the 'witness.' The Church is called 'apostolic' by reference to these witnesses, and this adjective is even used in the Creed in order to make plain that the doctrine of the Church is in no way different from that of Christ's immediate disciples.¹⁹

He further suggests that 'apostolicity... remained the basic criterion in the history of the formation of the canon, because it was the only true characteristic of the Christian *kerygma* as such.'²⁰ Faithfulness to the *kerygma*, then, means faithfulness to the apostolic witness and to the apostolic message. The continuity of this faithfulness from one epoch to another is responsible for the creation of the body of tradition—the living reflection of the Christian community upon the *kerygma*.

Tradition must 'not be venerated for its own sake,' yet we have an obligation to listen to the teachings of the fathers in order that they may serve as our guides by 'pointing... the nature of biblical faith.'²¹

If we take the historical-critical method seriously, neither Scripture nor tradition can be binding upon us in terms of its form and the culturally-historically conditioned elements. What is binding upon us, is the message 'that God is for us; that he has declared himself on our behalf;... so that we might know, once and for all, that he loves us unconditionally.'²²

However, the people of God must be organised in order that

faithfulness and continuity may be achieved. And the historical-critical method has provided the Christian community with a new freedom hitherto unknown. No longer is the Christian community chained by a biblical literalism which characterised segments of Protestantism since the Reformation. No longer is the Church under the Scriptures as if the Scriptures were the code of Hamurabi or that of the Medes and the Perses. But the Church is and remains under the message of the Scriptures – that God loves man unconditionally. Therefore, it is within the legitimate rights of the people of God to choose the form which corresponds most with their cultural experience and patterns of organisation. That form would have meaning for them; assure them a valid level of belonging; and promote avenues for action which are functional.

This understanding can engender a number of problems, such as disunity, disharmony and fragmentation; unless, of course, the question of authority in ecclesiology is established and accepted. The ground of authority in ecclesiology is

Jesus Christ alone, on which foundation the building is growing into a temple of God in the Spirit.²³

It would be fallacious to assume that unity and harmony can be attained if all the people of God were moulded into one ecclesiological pattern. It would be, furthermore, a denial of the ability of the Holy Spirit to operate within the people of God and to build them up as indeed the body of Christ. Only an ecclesiology which pays lip service to the Holy Spirit and which sees him working solely within the hearts of men can afford the luxury of institutional and organisational uniformity.

The promise which Jesus made to his disciples regarding the role of the Holy Spirit speaks for itself: 'If I do not go, your Advocate will not come, whereas if I go, I will send him to you... when he comes who is the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all truth,' (John 16:7b and 13). Thus, the Holy Spirit is the authenticator of and guide 'into all truth.' He builds on the foundation laid once and for all by Jesus Christ. What the Spirit builds is drawn from Christ; and whatever 'he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine,' (John 16:15b). This is an affirmation of Eastern theology's

understanding that the pneumatological event incorporates the christological.

Historic apostolic succession and continuity must be viewed as faithfulness and submission to the guiding of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of that succession and continuity. Historic apostolic succession cannot be understood mechanically; yet, the historical-horizontal must be maintained as a check on faithfulness. Where the historical-horizontal faithfulness and the vertical faith-obedience lines of continuity 'intersect,' there the Church happens.²⁴

St. Peter was rightly singled out from the rest of the apostles. He was declared the rock by Jesus, and to him were delivered the keys of the kingdom. It is Peter who represents properly the historic succession – the horizontal line of continuity. But that is not all that Peter represents.

Origen gives an extensive explanation on Matt. 16:18. He rightly interprets the famous words of Christ as a consequence of the *confession* of Peter on the road of Caesarea Philippi: Simon the rock on which the Church is founded, because he expressed the true belief in the divinity of Christ. Thus according to Origen, all those saved by faith in Jesus Christ receive also the keys of the Kingdom: in other words, the successors of Peter are *all believers*. 'If we also say,' [Origen] writes, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, then we also become Peter... for whoever assimilates to Christ, becomes the Rock.'²⁵

Peter is an adjectival noun given by our Lord to Simon based on the quality of faith he had exhibited. Continuity with Peter is a continuity of faith; if the believer has the same faith which Peter had, he, too, becomes Peter and on him the Church could be built the foundation of which and its chief cornerstone is Jesus Christ himself.

The apostleship of Paul can, perhaps, be taken as a model for the vertical faith-obedience typology. And as A. Satake puts it:

Paul understands his apostleship as the grace of God which calls him and entrusts him with the task of proclamation, so that he not only can bring salvation to others... but he himself can come to salvation. In Pauline apostleship the indicative and the imperative are united.²⁶

For Paul 'being sent,' and 'being called,' form one singular phenomenon in which God is the active subject. Both aspects of the one phenomenon portray the fullness of apostolicity – they are inseparable. And to further clarify this point, Samuel Sandmel says:

An apostle in its basic meaning... is someone who is sent. In Paul's view, however, the Apostle is simultaneously called and sent. All too often apostle is misunderstood through over-accentuating the 'being sent' at the expense of the 'call.'²⁷

The vehemence with which Paul defended his apostleship was a reaction to the challenges that were made to him. In Rom. 1:1, I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1 Paul adds the title *apostolos* to his name.

At the very opening [of his letters and] claims to be the one who is divinely commissioned to preach the gospel of Christ and to plant Christianity.²⁸

Much like the Old Testament prophets he viewed his call in 'retrospect.' He was keenly aware that the 'hand of the Lord had taken hold of him,' and that he was continuously being guided by the Spirit 'in the pursuit of his mission.'²⁹

Paul's defence of his apostleship occupies a significant portion of his writings. His past as a persecutor of the Church was, it seems, haunting him. His apostleship was being challenged specifically because he had been a persecutor of the Church and did not belong to the circle of the Twelve. Myers and Freed suggest that

though he admitted that he was the least of the apostles (I Cor. 15:9), he steadfastly maintained that he was not inferior to the others (II Cor. 11:5; 12:11). Had he not seen the Lord? (I Cor. 9:1). His apostleship was 'not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father' (Gal. 1:1).³⁰

Paul, therefore, insisted that the authority for his apostleship is not contingent on the agency of man – not even the agency of the Twelve. He proclaimed the fact that God had set him apart from before his birth for the special task of apostleship (Gal. 1:15f.). The important factor remains to qualify him as an apostle, and that is the appearance of the risen Lord to him even though that was 'as to one untimely born' (I Cor. 15:8). This was the only credential needed to validate his call to be an apostle. Thus

if Paul ascribes the origin of his Christian life to God's initiative and appears to exclude every human agency, that is intended to serve as a clarification of his relationship to the first apostles.... He stands alongside them independently as one who received his Christianity directly from the Lord (Gal. 1:11f.).³¹

If that were the case, why did he go to Jerusalem? He did not go to Jerusalem directly after his experience of the Risen Lord in the dramatic encounter on the road to Damascus. On the contrary, he went 'at once' to Arabia (Gal. 1:17). After Arabia, it was not Jerusalem yet; it was Damascus again. It is difficult to determine what place in Arabia it was to which Paul had gone and what he had done there. One can conjecture that it was the edge of the Syrian Desert to which he had withdrawn; it was a withdrawal for the purpose of contemplation, and communion with God in the quietness of the desert.

But to Jerusalem he finally went. His purpose was to get 'acquainted with Cephas,' or to get 'to know him' (Gal. 1:18). Olaf Moe suggests that this meeting to get acquainted with Cephas was

to emphasize that he did not present himself before the apostolic college in order to receive instruction or appointment from them.... His own purpose in seeking Peter was that he might become acquainted with him as the leader among the apostles. How could Paul do otherwise than to look up the man whom the Lord had so signally distinguished?³²

In Gal. 1:18 Paul presents his purpose for the first visit to Jerusalem. He says that on this visit he remained with Peter 'fifteen days.' One may contend from this that the two apostles became acquainted and shared their faith with each other.³³ However, it was during Paul's second visit to Jerusalem 'after fourteen years' (Gal. 2:1), that Paul laid before the apostolic community 'the gospel' as he preached it to the Gentiles. Thus it was through the second visit, for which we have another viewpoint in Acts 15, that the community of faith came together to authenticate the work of Paul and his party among the Gentiles. They, therefore, became in communion with each other on the grounds of the true faith each had, the singling out by Christ, the calling and the sending of each.

Peter and Paul offer the student of ecclesiology two valid possibilities for the ground of authority. In both cases the risen Lord

is the active subject – calling and sending. In Peter's case we have the first of the apostles who represent the circle of men who had come in direct contact with the Lord in his earthly ministry; they represent also the historic continuity. Whereas in Paul's case we have the model of the apostle whom the risen Lord can call directly and independently of the Twelve. Both, however, must be in communion with each other as Peter and Paul in fact became. This communion symbolises the intersection of the two lines.

A proposal for the restructuring of Protestantism in Lebanon

In order that institutions may flourish, they must reflect the patterns of cultural organisation of the society in which they exist. The Protestant churches in Lebanon are divided, weak, and, to a measurable degree, alienated from the rest of society because they reflect a culture and an organisational structure other than their own.

Historically the family is the pattern after which the Church is structured; and as we have seen, Protestantism in Lebanon is thus far an exception to the rules. In our day the organisational structure of the family in Lebanon is the extended-nuclear. Any restructuring of the Church in that land must take into serious consideration the family structure, if the goal is the strengthening of the Church in terms of offering avenues of belonging, and cohesion with the rest of society for the service of that society.

In order that we may be able to come to grips with the current social realities in Lebanon, a definition of our terminology is necessary. The extended family pattern, as it existed in previous periods and which still continues in those areas which are untouched by modernisation and economic development, may be understood as follows: it is patriarchal in the most traditional sense where the family is ruled by the father; all important decisions are made by him; and the children execute the will of the father. Economically, socially, politically, what the father wills is what the family does.

Wherever economic development and industrialisation occur, the breakup of the extended family has taken place. The result of the breakup of the extended family is the nuclear family. And since economic development and industrialisation in Lebanon have not reached the magnitude they have reached in the economically and industrially highly developed countries, the nuclear family in Lebanon differs from that of such lands. The nuclear family is the conjugal unit. It has its own life to live; its decisions to make; and its existence to maintain. In Lebanon it does so in relation to the other conjugal units within the framework of the extended family. Each nuclear or conjugal unit maintains a close relationship and connection to the others. But in its own existence as a nuclear unit, it functions independently from the others.

This pattern of relation which exists between the extended and the nuclear families manifests itself in what we may call the extended-nuclear. Relation and connectionalism are among its chief traits. Here the roles are modified to accommodate the needs and the wills of all those involved.

The extended-nuclear family may represent the fullness of the Church in a particular region – in this case the Lebanon. Each nuclear family unit corresponds to a local congregation. What must be remembered, however, is that each of the nuclear family units maintains an organic connection to the others through the bonds of the extended family. Similarly, each local congregation will maintain an organic connection with the other congregations, through the extended family of churches in a region. The destiny of the one and that of the whole are not separable one from the other. The extended family will properly represent a church judicatory – a whole unit of the Body of Christ.

The extended family of churches, as a judicatory, shall be named a presbytery in view of the fact that an elder person is accorded a position of respect and whose word is honoured by others. In the extended-nuclear family the role of the father is one of leadership and representation. He represents the whole family which he embodies, but which he does not rule as did his predecessor in the purely extended family. He is accorded a position

of honour and dignity. And as a Lebanese proverb puts it: 'When your son has grown up, become to him as a brother.' The father in the extended family, however, remains the first among the equals.

Thus in a culture, though to a measure nuclearised, but which still has the character of an extended family, it would appear wise that the father, as head of the family in the organisation of the church, be given the title of bishop. This will set him apart from the others in terms of function which corresponds to his role in the physical family, namely that of leader, teacher, and representative.

The role of the father in each of the nuclear family units does not differ materially from that of the father in the extended family units. His role also is one of leadership, teaching, and representation; he also embodies his own immediate family unit. The relation with the father in the extended family remains that of son to father, but as one who has grown up and become as a brother.

Inasmuch as each nuclear family unit eventually becomes an extended family, the office of bishop – leader, teacher, and representative – will change hands. This gives an opportunity for more than one person to fill that office.

Consequently in order to reflect the cultural pattern of family organisation, the Church needs to provide for the smooth change from one bishop to another. This may be through the determination that each bishop will serve for a specific period of time – not necessarily a life-time – as the physical father in an extended family does. Our analogy is one of relation and not of being.

The use of the title 'bishop' will more than likely enhance relations with the Eastern Churches in Lebanon whether Orthodox or Uniate Catholic. The relationship will become more one of equals instead of the Protestant minister being regarded as a lesser clergyman. It will also restore a biblical image which the Reformers did not repudiate theologically, and underline the fact that Reformed ministers are indeed bishops of their congregations.

Now that the forcefulness of the ecumenical age has acted upon the leaders of the Protestant churches in Lebanon to explore the possibility of union among themselves, it appears opportune that an analysis such as this be taken into serious consideration.

Those who are involved in discussions for possible union are the following: The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon; the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church in Jordan, Lebanon, And Syria; the National Evangelical Church in Beirut, which withdrew from the National Evangelical Synod in 1959; the Lutheran Church in Jordan;³⁴ and the National Evangelical Church in Damascus, another church which withdrew from the National Evangelical Synod. The Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East is not a participant in these negotiations mainly due to the fact that they use the Armenian language in their life and practice.

The self-understanding of these churches can be summed up by a minute from the actual process of working towards union:

After a detailed discussion those present insisted that the preamble of the proposed constitution must be reworded in order that it may show the Christian origin of the negotiating churches, even though they have the Reformed character, that they are heirs of the history and authentic Christian tradition which sprang from the region.³⁵

They also recognise their indebtedness to the Western Protestant missionaries which they express in the preamble of the proposed constitution.

The uniting churches are indebted to the mother churches in their complete inheritance in the undivided Church and which by its nature is stamped with the seal of the Reformation. The uniting churches shall find the precious elements of reform in this inheritance taking their proper place in their life and teachings.³⁶

At the present time there is the will to unite the different Protestant churches in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. The basis of the union should consist of two chief elements. First, the authority for ecclesiology should be firmly rooted and grounded in the Scripture and tradition in terms of the intersection concept of the faith-obedience relation to God in Christ and the horizontal-continuity with the apostolic Church. And, second, the ecclesiological structure which they choose should be compatible with the patterns of organisational structures of their society and which can offer meaning and cohesion.

However, the word of caution which was addressed to the Consultation on Church Union in the United States by John Cardinal Willebrands is also appropriate to the situation here. He says:

In short, the tension formulated in the Vatican Council can be an honest challenge only if the Roman Catholic Church gives witness in her life that the legitimate plurality of local values and of responses to local needs is never crushed by universal uniformity and that world-wide responsibility and the openness to the values and needs of others is never weakened by hypnosis with local concerns.³⁷

The concerns of the uniting churches, in other words, must transcend the limited scope of the immediate geographic, political, and social needs; yet, such concerns cannot and should not be overlooked. As a part of the holy catholic church, the uniting churches recognise this problem and speak to it directly in the proposed constitution.

The uniting church agrees in all efforts to gather together all the divided members of the Church of Jesus Christ in one institution. And the final purpose of the unity of this church is a universal world-wide church which confesses the name of Jesus Christ. The uniting church desires to order all its activities in such a way which will guarantee communion with all the branches of the Church of Christ. And to continue to seek the strengthening of this communion and to work for the complete unity in one body of all the divisions of the Church of Christ. Therefore, the uniting church welcomes evangelical and non-evangelical churches to unite with it.³⁸

In this vision local concerns do not figure greatly. Rather, the vision embraces a 'spiritual' world-wide concern. More attention must be given to local needs and concerns beyond the naming of the uniting church – the United Evangelical Church in the Arab East.

The proposal of the uniting churches in Lebanon does not reflect sufficiently well the organisational structure of its immediate society. In the proposal we find a reflection of a society which no longer exists – the purely extended family; a high-church episcopal system is at this time as unrealistic as was the introduction of Presbyterianism early in the nineteenth century.³⁹

The uniting Protestant churches in Lebanon must keep in mind that faithfulness to Scripture and to tradition does not conflict with the idea of correspondence and correlation between the structures of society and those of the church. Rather, faithfulness to Scripture and to tradition requires of man today a thorough commitment to the event of Jesus Christ and to God's revelation of himself in Christ, and to the responsibility of transmitting and delivering to others that which he receives. Tradition requires the continuity of the people of God and not of a particular structure in which the people of God organise themselves.

With these considerations in mind, the structure of the uniting churches will take the following shape.

Organisation in the service of Christ to the world

Ministry is a gift of God to those whom he calls in Christ to be his body. Understood in this manner, ministry becomes the responsibility and the privilege of the whole people of God. 'The meaning and the mandate of this ministry are found in [Christ], for he is the chief minister, the great high priest, of the entire people of God.'⁴⁰

Because of the varieties of gifts, not all the people of God have the same function, even though all have the same calling. The uniting churches in Lebanon should not commit the same error as did the 'Plan of Union for the Church of Christ Uniting' in the United States. Distinctions between the ordained and the unordained are erased.⁴¹ The Vatican II *schema* on the Church captures better the sense of the priesthood because of their baptism into Christ and their ingrafting into his body.⁴² But the definitions of Vatican II maintain a distinction between the ordained and the unordained in terms of function, beyond that which is shared in the one priesthood of all the faithful.

Even though 'ordination does not exclude [the ordained] from the *laos*,'⁴³ the ordained are set apart, not excluded, for the sake of

shepherding and caring for the *laos* of God. This unfortunately the 'Plan of Union' does not bring out.

The whole people of God also share in 'Christ's prophetic office.'⁴⁴ They, therefore, are jointly responsible for witness to God's saving act in Christ. They are ambassadors whose task is the proclamation of the good news. No one is exempt from this responsibility.

When distinctions of function are set forth, it does not mean that the ordained are set over against the unordained. Such a distinction of function simply makes clear whose task it is to do what in the total life of the Christian community. It is a division of labour.

Our typology is the family. While there is no distinction between one member of the family and another in terms of belonging to the family, each individual member has his own function and role within the framework of the family.

The structure and organisation must reflect two important factors: first, that all structural and organisational forms are recruited in the service of Christ to the world; and, second, that such forms as may be chosen are functional and are compatible with the organisation of society.

For the sake of the unity and purity of the Church, the proposed form of ministry, while recognising the rightful place of the laity, would have bishop-elders, elders, and deacons. The bishop-elder would be invested with the authority to oversee, to teach, and to administer the sacraments of the Church. He would fulfil the function of shepherd and pastor in a congregation as his primary role. As a father he would care for, teach, and discipline his spiritual family.

In the exercise of his ministry he would be assisted by elders, elected by the congregation and ordained to their office by the bishop-elder. Inasmuch as they are the representatives of the congregation, they share in the fullness of ministry; and together with the bishop-elder they represent the whole body of Christ in a particular location. This is to say, that each congregation is the whole body of Christ and not only a portion of it.

The rapidly changing Middle Eastern society demands several specialised ministries of a service nature. To fulfill this demand, the proposed form of ministry shall have deacons elected in each congregation having skills and abilities which will meet the needs of such changing society. The deacons would be specialised ministers to the weak, the poor, the sick, the rejected, the lonely, and the refugee. Deacons would be ordained to their office by the bishop-elder of their congregation.

The government of the particular congregation would be entrusted to a body called the session – composed of the bishop-elder as its presiding officer, the elders and the deacons. Together they will share in the one ministry to which all have been called – as ambassadors of Christ bringing reconciliation and healing to their society.

Following our typology, we have thus far dealt with the nuclear family. The extended family is the pattern after which the extended family of churches shall be organised. The extended family of churches shall be called the presbytery, in Arabic, *mashyakha*, the place where the *sheikhs* meet. The *sheikh*, literally, the elder, is one in whom authority is vested, whose word is respected and honoured; he teaches, oversees, and disciplines. Thus the *mashyakha* is the corporate body of all the elders – the bishop-elders as well as the elders and deacons.

The functions of the *mashyakha* would consist of: ordaining the bishop-elders; founding and dissolving churches; overseeing the mission of the extended family of churches which compose it. Because the family typology we have followed requires that a father-figure preside over the extended family, the *mashyakha* would have as its presiding officer a bishop-elder. He would be the pastor of the bishop-elders within the *mashyakha* – the first among equals, and centre of unity.

Due to the fact that the proposed united church spans three nations, namely, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, the united church would be divided into a number of *mashyakh*as, presbyteries. Lebanon would comprise three presbyteries: Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the South, and the North. Syria would be divided also

into three presbyteries: Damascus and Central Syria, the South, and the North. Jordan would have two presbyteries: the East Bank and the West Bank.

All of the above named presbyteries would form one Synod as a testimony to the unity and wholeness of the one body of Christ; they will be together on the same road. The basic responsibility of the Synod would be for Christian education, theological education, and mission within and outside of its bounds. A bishop-elder would be the presiding officer of the Synod, and, as such, he would be responsible for the care – pastoral and ministerial – of all the bishop-elders within the Synod.

Footnotes

- 1 Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- 2 Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- 3 Parsons, *Introduction, Sociology of Religion*, *op. cit.*, p. xxxii.
- 4 Barbara W. Hargrove, *Reformation of the Holy: A Sociology of Religion*. F. A. Davies Company, Philadelphia, 1971, p. 91.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- 6 Michel Bergmann, 'Structures de l'Église pour aujourd'hui,' *Verbum Caro*, XVII (1963), 40. *création de Jésus-Christ, ni de l'apôtre Paul... C'est une organisation ecclésiastique qui s'est faite à mesure des besoins et en vue de certains besoins, qui s'est adaptée à ces besoins.*
- 7 'Kirchenform und Gesellschaftsstruktur,' *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, XLI (1961), 290. *die Kirche als soziale Institution womit ihr eigentliches Wesen keinesfalls umschrieben sein soll – hat viele Wandlungen durchlaufen, die ihr Verhältnis zur «Welt» d.h. zur Gesellschaft, in die stets eingebettet ist, widerspiegeln.*
- 8 John S. Ruef, 'The Role of Tradition in the Church,' *Anglican Theological Review*, XLV (1963), p. 165.

- 9 Eugene Hillman, 'The Development of Christian Marriage Structures,' *The Future of Marriage as Institution*, edited by Franz Bockle, Herder and Herder, New York, 1970, p. 30.
- 10 Mead, *The Lively Experiment*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- 11 Quoted in Herve Carrier, *The Sociology of Religious Belonging*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1965, p. 227.
- 12 Nottingham, *op. cit.*, p. 221.
- 13 *Education in the Forming of American Society*, Vintage Books, New York, n.d., copyright 1960, University of North Carolina Press, p. 15.
- 14 Samih K. Farsoun, 'Family Structure and Society in Modern Lebanon,' *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*, Vol. II, edited by Louise E. Sweet, The Natural History Press, New York, p. 258.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 258. Also see p. 260 where Farsoun shows that this pattern of organization continued in the same way until the Mandate period following World War I.
- 16 Islam understands inspiration in a very mechanical manner: God spoke and man recorded.
- 17 Robert McAfee Brown points out that for Karl Barth, the strictly biblical theologian, 'it is extremely important that the Bible comes to us in intensely human form. God uses the biblical writers precisely as human beings,' in 'Scripture and Tradition in the Theology of Karl Barth,' *Scripture and Ecumenism*, edited by L.J. Swidler, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, p. 26.
- 18 G.W. H. Lampe, 'The Authority of Scripture and Tradition,' *Authority and the Church*, edited by R.R. Williams, S.P.C.K., London, 1965, p. 13.
- 19 John Meyendorff, 'The Meaning of Tradition,' in Swidler, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- 21 Brown, in *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 23 Nikos A. Nissiotis, 'Ecclesiology and Ecumenism of the Second Session of the Vatican Council II,' *The Greek Orthodox Review*, X (1964), 29.
- 24 Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 77f.
- 25 John Meyendorff, 'St. Peter in Byzantine Theology,' *The Primacy of Peter*, John Meyendorff et. al., The Faith Press, London, 1963, pp. 9-10.
- 26 A. Satake, 'Apostolat und Gnade bei Paulus,' *New Testament Studies*, XV (1968), 106. *Paulus versteht seinen Apostolat als Gnade Gottes, die ihn beruft und mit der Verkündigungsaufgabe betraut, damit er nicht nur andern Heil bringen... sondern selbst zum Heil Kommen kann. Indicativ und Imperativ sind also im paulinischen Apostolat vereint.*
- 27 Samuel Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul*, Farrar, Strauss & Cudahy, New York, 1958, p. 101.

- 28 Ernest De Witt Burton, *The International Critical Commentary; A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1952, p. 2.
- 29 J.M. Myers and E.D. Freed, 'Is Paul Also Among the Prophets?' *Interpretation*, XX (1966), p. 44.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 52.
- 31 Walther von Loewenich, *Paul, His Life and Work*, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1960, pp. 46-47.
- 32 Olaf Moe, *The Apostle Paul, His Life and Work*, trans. L.A. Vigness, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1950, p. 132.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 133. See also John Meyendorff, 'St. Peter in Byzantine Theology,' Meyendorff *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 9ff. where he asserts that the attribute 'Cephas' was given to Simon on the grounds of his faith. His primacy is a primacy of faith.
- 34 I did not treat the Lutheran Church in Jordan in my analysis inasmuch as its origins are different from the three churches which I did analyse. In addition, the Lutheran Church in the Near East does not represent a major evangelical trend.
- 35 Minutes of the Conference for the Education of the Pastors of the Evangelical Churches, July 1-6, 1972, Christian Conference Center, Dhour Shweir, Lebanon, p. 2, author's translation.
- 36 Preamble, *Proposed Constitution of the United Evangelical Church in the Arab East*, p. 1, author's translation.
- 37 'An Address by the Secretary of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity,' *Consultation on Church Union, A Catholic Perspective*, USCC Publication Office, Washington, 1970, p. 17.
- 38 Preamble, *Proposed Constitution of the United Evangelical Church in the Arab East*, p. 2, author's translation.
- 39 See Appendix II on the Proposed Structure.
- 40 *A Plan of Union for the Church of Christ Uniting*, Consultation on Church Union, 1970, p. 38.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 42 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,' *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, general editor, The American Press, 1966, pp. 26-27.
- 43 *A Plan of Union*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- 44 *Documents of Vatican II*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

We have thus far maintained that religious institutions, as indeed is the case with all social institutions, are a result of the collective effort of man in society. The church is a religious institution and as such falls under the category we have posited. Yet, as Christians we ascribe holiness to the church.

This holiness is not related to the structure or the form or the organisation; for structure, form, and organisation are the external manifestation in which the being of the church is cast so that it would be meaningful and expressive of man's new being and relation to God through Christ. Man brings into these expressions his myths, symbols, and his total cultural experience.

The holiness of the church is the holiness of Christ, its head. It is a derived holiness in spite of man's sinfulness. In no way can we say that the holiness of the church is based on the merits or worth of those who form it. Thus it belongs to two realms at one and the same time: as institution, it is human in its form, and therefore, sinful; as the bride of Christ, his body, it is holy because he is holy.

The Church and culture in tension

Christians confess faith in a 'one, and holy Catholic Church.' This confessional statement raises two main questions: first, if Christians confess faith in a 'one' church, how can such a confessional position be reconciled with the ideas proposed in this thesis that the church is predicated on the structures of the family and patterned after its organisation? And, second, if the church is 'holy,' as Christians

claim it to be, does this confessional position, again, present a difficulty in relation to the being of the church as an institution among others?

With reference to the first question, it must be noted that the unity of the church is not contingent on a uniformity in structure and organisation. What unifies people is not a structural system; rather, it is a meaning system, common loyalties, shared objectives and purposes. In the case of the church the unifying elements are faith in Jesus Christ as head and Lord of the church; as Saviour and Redeemer; as Reconciler of man with God, and man with man. And inasmuch as Jesus Christ is the only foundation and the chief cornerstone on which the Church is built, those who confess such faith do form the one Church which Christians confess creedally. The test of the oneness of the Church is whether they confess the same faith or not; whether they find meaning, belonging, and avenues for action which can express that faith or not.

Uniformity of structure and organisation cannot be the test of unity. Structure and organisation speak to the question of functionality, utility, and compatibility with cultural structures and organisation. Faith, obedience, the proclamation of the singular *kerygma*, and sacramental practice speak to the question of unity. Faith lays a claim on man; obedience is faith in action; proclamation and sacramental practice promote belonging and cohesion. Furthermore, for mission faith and obedience are more important than structure, for structure is transitory.

Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* laid down four principles denoting full incorporation, and, therefore, unity in the one body of Christ. These four principles are: relation to Peter, proclamation based on the sacred Scriptures, creedal confessions, and sacramental practice.¹ The first principle expresses the fact that any individual who relates to the faith of Peter, or confesses as Peter had that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God,' belongs to the body of Christ. It is true, however, that the Council fathers also had in mind unity with the Pope as an expression of unity with Peter. This does not necessarily mean that they were intent or insistent on a structural uniformity. To the Council fathers, the Pope is today's *coryphaeus*.

The second principle presents no problem to the non-Roman Catholic. It affirms that the content of preaching must be based on the sacred Scriptures; that the sacred Scriptures are to the Christian the source which testifies most clearly to the Sonship and Lordship of Jesus Christ – the head of the one body, his church. The position of the Reformation asserts that preaching is the exposition of the Word of God. The two positions are harmonious with each other. The sacred Scriptures are, then, the norm by which the content of preaching is measured and validated. Preaching based on the exposition of the Word of God rightly offers another criterion for unity.

Creedal confessions, as the third principle of unity, point us to the necessity of the unity of faith, to the check which the early fathers can offer us in our times, in order that true unity among Christians may be attained. Again it is not the structure or the organisation which form the rallying point of unity; it is the meaning system which can offer cohesion to diverse peoples. That peoples from different cultural backgrounds can be one in Christ because of their faith and meaning system and in spite of their obviously divergent structural organisation is a genuine possibility.

The fourth principle, sacramental practice, offers Christians the means of grace by which they are united with Christ and with each other. Through baptism the individual is ingrafted into the body of Christ which transcends cultures, languages, and nations. Baptism makes all peoples members in the one body of Christ; cultures, languages, and nations notwithstanding. The Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, as a sacrament, brings nourishment and feeding to those who have become members of the one body through baptism. Through the Eucharist, Christians appropriate the benefits of the one acceptable sacrifice which the chief high priest, Christ, made for all men once and for all. The Council fathers had isolated these two sacraments as those which can build the body of Christ.

The true oneness of the church, therefore, is predicated upon the oneness of faith, the oneness of the source for the content of the proclamation, the oneness of creedal confessions, and the oneness of the sacramental practice. However, it must be noted that the content of faith, proclamation, creedal confessions, and sacramental

practice can also contribute to the fragmentation of the church. True oneness remains distinct from structural organisational uniformity, and allows the different members of the one body to be indeed different members.

Besides the question of oneness, the confessional statement with which we began raises another: the question of holiness. The Church is 'holy'. This points to the fact that the church is more than just an institution among others in society. But, yet, as one analyses the structures, the forms, and the manner in which the church operates, one sees its institutional nature and recognizes it as an institution among others. Here is the heart of the problem with which the Christian must deal. He has to determine if there is a point of conflict, understand it, and attempt to resolve it. Another option is that he may not understand it, and yet accept it as a mystery.

Throughout this study, we have pointed out that religion is the creation of man in society; that man gives his beliefs forms which are developed by his society; that these forms must be meaningful and able to promote solidarity, belonging, and cohesion commensurate with the plausibility structures of society.

The Confession of 1967, the most recent confessional statement of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, expresses a clear understanding of this phenomenon.

The Church in its mission encounters the religions of men and in that encounter becomes conscious of its own human character as a religion. God's revelation to Israel, expressed within Semitic culture, gave rise to the religion of the Hebrew people. God's revelation in Jesus Christ called forth the response of Jews and Greeks and came to expression within Judaism and Hellenism as the Christian religion. The Christian religion, as distinct from God's revelation of himself, has been shaped throughout its history by the cultural forms of its environment.²

The Confession of 1967 rightly distinguishes God's revelation of himself in Christ from the human response which this revelation evokes. As those who are called out by Christ, the church organises itself clearly in human forms issuing from the culture and its patterns of organisation. As the body of Christ, the church has its divine as well as human aspects. It is holy because of the holiness of Christ, its

head; it is human in the same manner as the Son of God is also human.

The Church as institution, exists in tension with the world around it. It has to be true to its calling as the bride of Christ, but it also has to live in the world and for the world. Living in and for the world requires of it a measure of accommodation with culture. This accommodation may present the dangers of syncretism; but it does not have to.

Purposely and with an awareness of such a possibility our discussion has centred on religion as distinct from revelation; on form as distinct from content. If this is properly understood, no one can level the accusation that our intention has been to 'compromise the true faith.'³ No syncretism is sought between faith and culture—not even between religion and culture! Rather, religious forms must stem from the cultural milieu in order that meaning, belonging, and action may follow.

This implies that church structures must be flexible accommodating the cultural and societal dictates. And since culture is not static, but dynamic, its own forms must be recognised and accepted as changing and transitory. This is to say, that the forms in which Christianity is presented must not only be relevant, but also meaningful within the framework of a living experience.

But to what extent can accommodation be carried? With Visser't Hooft we can affirm that the criterion for the measurement of the truth or falsehood of cultural accommodation is the canon of Scripture. 'The canon is first of all normative with regard to the content of the message to be presented.'⁴ And were we to be truly in conformity with the requirements of the canon, we would 'follow the lead which the Scriptures give... to enter courageously into all cultural and religious situations and to seek to go as far as possible in using their modes of expression.'⁵

The Protestant missionaries who had gone to Syria and Lebanon last century had not learned an important fact before they embarked on their task of mission: that 'the messenger must seek to de-accommodate his message before he seeks to bring it to other people in another culture or environment.'⁶ And this operation, in

effect, means that 'de-accommodation is to liberate the message from historic forms which are not essential to its transmission and irrelevant in the new situation.'⁷

Accommodation, in the best sense of the word, is not to place new categories alongside traditional Christian categories; rather, it should 'achieve a true interpenetration.'⁸ Unfortunately, the traditional Christian categories of Syria and Lebanon were totally discarded, and were replaced by new forms and meaning systems which were alien to the people involved. No allowance for 'true interpenetration' was deemed possible or desirable. The plausibility structures of the Syrian-Lebanese were pronounced undesirable and incompatible with the 'enlightened' faith position of the revivalist missionaries, who had viewed their task as the 'enlightenment of the degenerate.'

Georg Simmel suggests that 'Christianity is the highest form of religion because social and spiritual unity merge in a way that is not found elsewhere.'⁹ Simmel's understanding of Christianity is dangerous if taken at face value. It is possible, on the grounds of this understanding, to assume that syncretism is the desired end. But, this does not seem to be Simmel's intent. He appears to say that Christianity from its inception, has used the cultural societal medium effectively, and that the content or the message of the Christian faith appropriated prevalent cultural forms to allow for optimum meaning.

Obviously, there are those points in history where it is difficult to distinguish Christianity from the culture in which it existed. The most notable example is the medieval period. This is the consequence of thorough and complete indigenisation. Contemporary Protestant missionary strategy has committed the same error in its attempt to remedy the previous cultural aggression. They now call for indigenisation.

Will Herberg clarifies this problem when he shows that Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism in America are branches of the one religion – the American way of life.¹⁰ This is not the kind of accommodation in which we are interested. We are interested, however, in maintaining a sufficient level of tension between

Christianity and culture so that Christianity may be recognised as the way in which culture may be redeemed. Culture, nevertheless, must provide the modes of expression, the framework, and the meaningful categories so that the Christian message may become relevant and meaningful.

Karl Barth pointed out that religion, insofar as it is man's attempt to reach God, is demonic and abominable.¹¹ Yet he recognised and insisted that the mode in which revelation was received was 'intensely human.' Barth's christocentricity yielded this attitude – 'there is no other name under heaven by which man will be saved,' (Acts 4:12). In this he was right, and he reacted properly to the nineteenth century syncretists, who had attempted to reconcile Christianity and culture.¹² He rejected the concept of *homo religiosus* and insisted that Christians must place the righteousness of faith over against 'all religious and ecclesiastical being and having and doing.'¹³

Dietrich Bonhoeffer hailed Barth's position as one of the most important contributions Barth had made to contemporary theological thought. Bonhoeffer himself pressed the implications of Barth's interpretation of *homo religiosus* and pointed out the necessity of a 'non-religious' interpretation of Christianity.¹⁴

However, neither Barth nor Bonhoeffer fully appreciated the implications of a sociological understanding of religion. They seem to have been in a tight spot. Their reaction to the full identification of Christianity with the German order in their times must have led to that position.

It is difficult to visualise the possibility of truly apprehending the implications of Bonhoeffer's concept of 'the man for others,'¹⁵ without appreciating positively the influences of the society in which the Christian man lives. To be truly a 'man for others,' one must be able to relate to the meaning system of the 'others' and that includes their religious forms which are culturally created.

If religion is not understood as man's effort to reach God, but as the encounter with the holy, and as the manner in which man comes to appropriate revelation and find in it meaning, that is, giving body and form to the content of the message of revelation, then it

does not constitute the abomination of which Barth was fearful.

Tillich understood revelation differently:

Revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately. The mystery which is revealed is of ultimate concern to us because it is the ground of our being. In the history of religion revelatory events always have been described as shaking, transforming, demanding, significant in an ultimate way. They derive from divine sources, from the power of that which is holy and which therefore has an unconditional claim on us.¹⁶

Revelation, according to Tillich, has been given fully, once and for all, and that any 'revelations within the Christian economy' will not offer anything 'substantially new.'¹⁷

The singularity of Tillich's methodology lies in the fact that it is 'subtle and complex in the extreme.' It is the consequence of his 'insistence that experience, functioning as a medium transforms the sources of theology.'¹⁸ Thus, experience produces a norm which can be viewed in terms of the 'collective experience of the Church.'

But such an expression is dangerously ambiguous. It could be understood to mean that the collective experience produces the content of the norm... the content of the norm is the biblical message.¹⁹

What the 'collective experience' indeed produces is the form in which the content is cast, giving it tangibility as well as credibility. Content and form are discernible factors, but they are also interdependent and correlated, as Tillich has shown.²⁰

Revelation cannot be received except in 'earthen vessels.' Thus the interdependence of the two factors is very intimate. Yet at the same time, the two factors must remain independently. All cultures are built on myths, and views of reality to which finality is ascribed.²¹ And when God breaks into history, as he did in Jesus Christ, he utilizes the myths and the various conceptions of reality already there and available to declare his message and will. The culture into which revelation is given becomes the medium which gives body, form, framework, tangibility, as well as imagery with which revelation is clothed.

Barth erred in not seeing the necessity of correlation between

the two discernible factors of culture and revelation. Revelation cannot be received in a cultural vacuum in order that it may be universally valid. God entered human history in a specific time, at a specific place, and manifested himself as man, in Jesus Christ, in all his conditionality so that he would not be the 'wholly other,' the remote and the unreachable – the unfathomable.

As Bultmann proposed, we need to de-accommodate and re-accommodate so that the *kerygma* may become perceivable and meaningful in each individual cultural situation. But we must always be aware of the danger of thorough and complete indigenisation. And, therefore, the church must remain recognisable in its two characteristics – its holiness as well as its humanity and conditionality.

Towards a theology of mission

Nineteenth-century Protestant missionary activity was the offspring of millenarian revivalism. It had no time to weigh or ponder the task ahead of it. Under the pressure of the impending millennium, revivalist missionaries plunged headlong into their mission to revive the backslider, restore the apostate, and bring the heathen to Christ – all in short order to hasten the day of the reign of Christ on earth.

Commitment coupled with a high level of feeling and an intensity of emotion characterised the 'prayer concerts,' the springboard of missionary vitality. Theology as a discipline to guide the missionary in the pursuit of his work was glaringly absent. Although passage of time brought about some changes, these were not of a sufficient degree to allow for the implications of the historical revolution, the advancement of man's knowledge about other peoples and cultures through sociology and anthropology to have any significant influence on the way missionaries operated. Paternalism continued even into our period despite the fact that 'fraternal workers' have replaced the traditional missionaries.

The last two decades ushered in radical changes in the understanding of mission – in spite of the vestiges of paternalism – as

a task to which all Christians are called and with which they are entrusted. It is in this light that I shall propose a theology of mission.

The New Testament offers the primitive church's understanding of its mission. Jesus Christ placed upon his followers the responsibility of spreading his message. He did not prescribe any methodologies, systems, or structures which they must use in the exercise of their mission.

Without any prescribed methodologies, systems, or structures they proceeded to fulfil their appointed responsibility. Very appropriately they utilised what was readily available in their society; values, methods, systems, and structures. History is a witness to their success.

But gradually the cultural forms of the Mediterranean world and that of southern Europe began hardening and acquired the character of universal forms. The universalising of these local forms created problems and tensions within the church; for example, the tension between Rome and northern Europe.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century reaffirmed the validity of local norms, forms, and patterns. But even then, the reforms which were introduced did not have a lasting effect on Protestantism. Protestant mission, in its classical forms, is a clear evidence that the universalising principle took deep root once more.

In Roman Catholic mission work and principles of the middle of the seventeenth century one can recognise the influences of the Counter-Reformation. The *Propaganda Fide* was aware of the negative value of cultural imposition as well as of the universalising principle. They instructed their missionaries

... [to] not regard it as your task, and do not bring any pressure to bear on the peoples, to change their manners, customs, and uses, unless they are evidently contrary to religion and sound morals. What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy, or some other European country to China? Do not introduce all that to them, but only the faith, which does not deprive or destroy the manners and customs of any people, always supposing that they are not evil, but rather wishes to see them preserved unharmed... Do not draw invidious contrasts between the customs of the peoples and those of Europe; do your utmost to adapt yourselves to them.²²

Unfortunately, however, this policy was not to last for long, particularly after the manner in which the Jesuits pursued their mission in China. They did not only use the available values, systems, and cultural patterns as a medium for the relevant communication of the Christian message, but allowed some of these values and systems which they found to become part and parcel of the Christian message.

The nineteenth century was not only the century of mission; it was also the century of colonialism and imperialism. The same social facts which shaped the lives of the colonialists and the imperialists were those which shaped the lives of the missionaries. In addition to the haste which the millennium forced upon the missionary, and, therefore, the impossibility of the study of other cultures adequately, the missionary was of the same dough of which the colonialist was shaped. He universalised his own ways, his own values, his own meaning system, and deemed it best if those to whom he went were to take up his more superior cultural forms and structures.

The emergence of new independent nations in the twentieth century introduced new factors into the understanding of mission. The new self-understanding of the newly independent nations demanded that they be accorded the dignity they deserve. They, therefore, began to affirm their own culture – its forms, values, systems of meaning, and organisational patterns as valid media for the transmission of the Christian message in their area. As the destinies of the new nations were being forged, the destinies of the so-called younger churches were also being forged; the two were like twins. What affected the one affected the other. Thus the new churches lost their 'shyness' and demanded that they have the say in their own churches instead of remaining under the tutelage of the paternalistic missionaries.

Thus accommodation²³ or translation²⁴ and the freedom to use what is native in terms of values, forms, systems of meaning, and structures are being restored. The local is once more being affirmed as normative for each location. The local assumes normativeness in terms of the media which can make the Christian message relevant and meaningful to each people and each culture.

The Jesuits who went to China were accused of carrying the principle of accommodation with culture too far. The American Protestant missionaries who went to Syria and Lebanon did not consider any possibility of any legitimate accommodation with the culture of Syria and Lebanon altogether. Both attitudes are erroneous and represent extremes – the first did harm to the Christian message by over-accommodation while the second did harm to the integrity of existing Christianity which was faithful to its Lord in spite of persecution and oppression by non-Christian rulers for over three hundred years.

The principle of accommodation means this: to allow for the possibility of interpenetration of two different ways of understanding reality; of seeing validity in both as authentic expressions of the yearnings and the aspirations of people manifested in cultural and religious forms. But the possibility of interpenetration cannot become a reality unless one is able and willing to de-accommodate oneself from the non-essential forms which are culturally and historically conditioned by one's own situation as one embarks on the task of mission. In other words, the missionary must take seriously the concept of 'emptying' oneself for the sake of the other; that is, he must take his cue from Jesus Christ himself, 'who did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself and took the form of a servant.' And being found 'in the likeness of man he was obedient unto death,' (Phil. 2:6f.).

Another example for the missionary is St. Paul who was willing to accommodate himself to each situation in which he found himself so that he might bring converts to Christ.

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; as they are subject to the law of Moses, I put myself under that law to win them, although I am not myself subject to it. To win Gentiles, who are outside the Law, I made myself like one of them, although I am not in truth outside God's law, being under the law of Christ.... Indeed, I have become everything in turn to men of every sort, so that in one way or another I may save some. (I Cor. 9:20ff.).

The salvation of people of every sort and condition was the mission of Paul; it was not the inculcation with the forms, and values of his ways of doing things, nor with those systems of meaning which were

culturally conditioned. The problem of the nineteenth-century missionaries was precisely that of the Judaisers of St. Paul's time. He did battle with the Judaisers and would have done battle with their successors, the nineteenth-century missionaries.

Among the most serious problems which faced the missionaries of the nineteenth century was their assumption that those whom they missionized must become in their own image. If they did not acquire their modes of thought, their meaning systems, their values, and categories of right and wrong, they have not become Christian nor have they received 'the gift of the Spirit.' Such an attitude of superiority – both cultural and religious as was exhibited by the missionaries – did harm to the integrity of the people to whom they went. J. Russell Chandran assesses the situation well.

It has often been assumed that what is good for one people should be good for others also and the Christian mission has been associated with the communication of forms of Christianity accepted as true and good by particular peoples in Europe and America. It has also been associated with the spread of the western way of life or the American way of life.²⁵

The form, not the content, was their ultimate in mission; or more kindly put; the form and the content were fused together that neither could be distinguished from the other.

Since their interest was in form and institutions, the missionaries did a great deal of good in education, in medicine, in social welfare, and other areas of service. And in spite of themselves, they inspired and promoted zeal among the ancient churches of the Near East. Furthermore, they helped, to a degree, in bringing about the renaissance of the Arabic language inasmuch as they insisted on teaching in Arabic during the early stages of mission.

The contemporary period has witnessed several changes in the attitudes of missionaries. But these changes have not been commensurate with the better knowledge which peoples of different cultures have come to have of each other. One can still see remnants of paternalism among some of the fraternal workers.

Ecumenicity and independence from traditional missionary control have forced upon the Protestant churches of Syria and

Lebanon new roles. They have to deal with the ancient churches of the area; with the 'mother' churches; and with the worldwide church. Thus they are coming of age rather rapidly in spite of the handicap which they had inherited – the spirit of dependence.

Now the Syrian-Lebanese Protestants have cordial relations with the ancient Eastern churches. They realise that their origin is in these Eastern churches, and, as such, are also heirs of the rich heritage of Eastern Christianity. They affirm a double heritage: the wealth of tradition and the benefits of the Protestant Reformation. Relations with the 'mother' churches are those of equals and partners in mission. They seek to fulfil their task of mission jointly with the 'mother' churches overseas. This is the realisation of the fact that mission is the concern of the whole church. Similarly, relations with the world-wide church are based on the principle that the whole church, as the body of Christ, shares in the one task of mission to which all have been called. Accordingly, the Protestant churches of Syria and Lebanon have taken their rightful place in the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

If mission is the task of the whole church, and it is, it becomes imperative that the whole church regularise mission work through world agencies such as the World Council of Churches in order that all may share in the one mission. Mission, then, becomes truly mission on six continents.

Nations are coming to their own; the smaller nations are affirming themselves and demanding their rightful dignity. Younger churches are coming of age; and peoples of different backgrounds have come to know each other far better due to the facility of transportation and communication; and the world, as Marshall McLuhan suggests, has become a 'global village.'

In the light of these facts, what is relevant mission in the second half of the twentieth century? Mission must be seen within the context of world community where the members of the world community see themselves in relation to their new self-understanding, the light of dignity and value of their own cultures, meaning systems, and values. The context of mission must be that 'of

a world community struggling for the development of a community of free and interdependent nations of equal dignity.'²⁶

The present ecumenical understanding of the church places squarely the responsibility of mission on all the members of the one body wherever they may be. For it is not just their own mission that they should carry out, but that of God; the mission of reconciliation with which all have been entrusted.

Most urgent among the issues which enslave man today is the problem of oppression – the oppression of the poor by the rich, the weak by the strong. The church must concern itself, therefore, with the alleviation of oppression, the liberation of the captives, and the restoration of human dignity to all those to whom it has been denied. In H. Richard Niebuhr's terminology, this is the task of Christ: transforming culture.²⁷

To transform culture, we must understand it. To relieve the oppressed and bring release to the captives, we must seek a clearer understanding of the underlying causes which have led to oppression and captivity. Even though we may be living in a 'global village,' peoples still do not understand each other's culture sufficiently well. And, as in a typical village, self-assertion, and the undermining of the other seem to be the most prominent mark of the world community.

Mission cannot be done while self-assertion and undermining of the other continue. Man will not be rid of this sickness unless he takes the time to dispel his ignorance of the other. And in knowing the other as an honest-to-God human being, he will be able to participate effectively in the task of mission and liberation.

Mission can no longer be understood in terms of sending and receiving churches. All must remember that Jesus Christ, the Lord and Head of the Church, is the one who calls and who sends – he calls all and he sends all. All must send and all must in humility receive. Only in this can mission truly become the mission of God and not the mission of a specific people. In this manner will mission become the act of witnessing to the 'reality of Christ and not just communication of certain formulations of that reality,'²⁸ or the transplantation of cultural values, meaning systems, and patterns

from one culturally assuming people to another.

The prophetic word of Isaiah and which was used by our Lord must characterise the purpose of mission once again.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me and he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Isa. 61:1-2)

This purpose must be translated into meaningful action within each cultural context; the use and abuse of power—economic and other—must be dealt with, or once again the church will be engaged in the creation of aliens at home.

Footnotes

- 1 *Documents of Vatican II*, *op. cit.*, p. 33ff.
- 2 *The Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Part I, Book of Confession*, second edition, The Office of the General Assembly, Philadelphia, 1970, p. 9.41.
- 3 W. A. Visser't Hooft, 'Accommodation—True and False,' *South East Asia Journal of Theology*, VIII (1967), 7.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 7.

- 9 Robert A. Nisbet, 'Review of Sociology of Religion by Georg Simmel, [Curt Rosenthal, translator]' Philadelphia Library, New York, 1959, *Review of Religious Research*, II (1960), 138.
- 10 Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, and Jew* Doubleday, New York, 1955, *passim*.
- 11 Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, The University of Chicago Press, 1955, 1ff.
- 12 See author's annotated bibliography on 'Secularity, Secularization, and Secularism,' *Listening*, VII (1972), p. 212.
- 13 James F. Childress and David B. Harned ed. *Secularization and the Protestant Prospect*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1970, p. 15.
- 14 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* Macmillan, New York, 1959, *passim*.
- 15 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Macmillan, New York, 1955, *passim*.
- 16 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 17 Avery R. Dulles, 'Paul Tillich and the Bible,' *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought*, edited by Thomas F. O'Meara and Donald M. Weisser, Image Books, (Doubleday), New York, 1969, p. 156.
- 18 Robert Clyde Johnson, *Authority in Protestant Theology*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 111.
- 19 Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64 and Vol. II, p. 13. See also Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- 21 See Herbert W. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology*, Harper & Row, New York, 1967, p. 5f.
- 22 Quoted in Elton Trueblood, *The Validity of the Christian Mission*, Harper & Row, New York, 1972, pp. 48-49.
- 23 Visser't Hooft, *op. cit.*, *passim*.
- 24 Warren Roth, 'Building a Universal Church on Local Church Foundations, I,' *Mission in the '70s, What Direction?* edited by J. T. Boberg and J. A. Scherer, Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools, 1972, p. 89.
- 25 J. Russell Chandran, 'The Future of Mission,' an address given in St. Louis, 20 April, 1972, unpublished paper, p. 1.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 27 H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1956, p. 19off.
- 28 Chandran, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Appendix I

A historio-demographic sketch of the people involved

When the American Protestant missionaries decided in the late 1820s to settle in Beirut and use it as their mission station instead of Jerusalem, Beirut was a small Ottoman city of about five to six thousand people. Many of the inhabitants of Beirut were Muslims. But since the Muslim Ottoman authorities did not look favorably upon any one attempting to disrupt the social-religious order, and the conversion of Muslims would have been construed in that light, the missionaries directed their attention to the Christian community which in their opinion needed revitalisation. They, therefore, worked with Christians in the city of Beirut as well as in the neighbouring villages of Mount Lebanon.

Nearby Hadath and Kafar Shima became centres for 'concerts of prayer.' Most of the Christians in these two villages were Maronites. Contacts were also established in 'Abeih and Deir al-Qamar, further up the mountain side. Again the Christians of these two towns were Maronites. It is no wonder then that the first converts to the Protestant faith were Maronites: Assaad Shidyak and Butrus al-Bustani.

In the 1830s missionary work had spread to the south—beginning with Sidon where relations were established with two Armenians for language instruction. These two men had been bishops of the Armenian Orthodox Church, but who got married and consequently fallen into disfavour with their Church.

The Arabic-speaking Christians of Sidon and its immediate surroundings were Greek Catholics, some Maronites and Orthodox. Sidon was a smaller city than Beirut, and it still is; in the early nineteenth century, Sidon was known as a small, fishing port. Its port was also used for import and export. Villagers from the vicinity brought their silk and their agricultural produce for sale in Sidon. Silk, as an industry, was the mainstay of all Mount Lebanon and not just the area near Sidon.

Further in South Lebanon, the missionaries found fertile soil among the Greek Orthodox community of Hassbayyah. The Hassbayyan Greek Orthodox community was in disarray. Many of them had become disaffected with the leadership of their Church and found a welcome ally in the Protestant missionaries. By becoming Protestant the Hassbayyans had assumed that they would get the protection of the British consul. That was the privilege of the 'Franks' (foreigners). Eli Smith, one of the early fathers of the mission to Syria, discouraged the Hassbayyans in their quest for protection. But they were not dissuaded; instead they went directly to the British consul and received the protection they sought.

The Greek Orthodox converts of Hassbayyah formed the largest group to come to the Protestant faith from any one Eastern Church. Neither the Maronites nor the Greek Orthodox were very numerous, and with the break between the Eastern Churches' hierarchies and the Protestant missionaries, the new converts to Protestantism were excommunicated from their original churches. Real rupture followed between the converts and their former co-religionists. They had to leave their towns; and the Hassbayyans, among others, came to Beirut.

It was in Beirut that they could find the protection they sought; and in Beirut business opportunities and employment were opened for them. The missionaries tried to persuade them to go back to their villages; with some they succeeded, but not with many.

Most of the Protestants of the early nineteenth century were rural, not very well educated—though a few individuals were highly educated according to the standards of the time—engaged in small family businesses in their villages, and not rich. Becoming

Protestants offered them possibilities of economic improvement through better education.

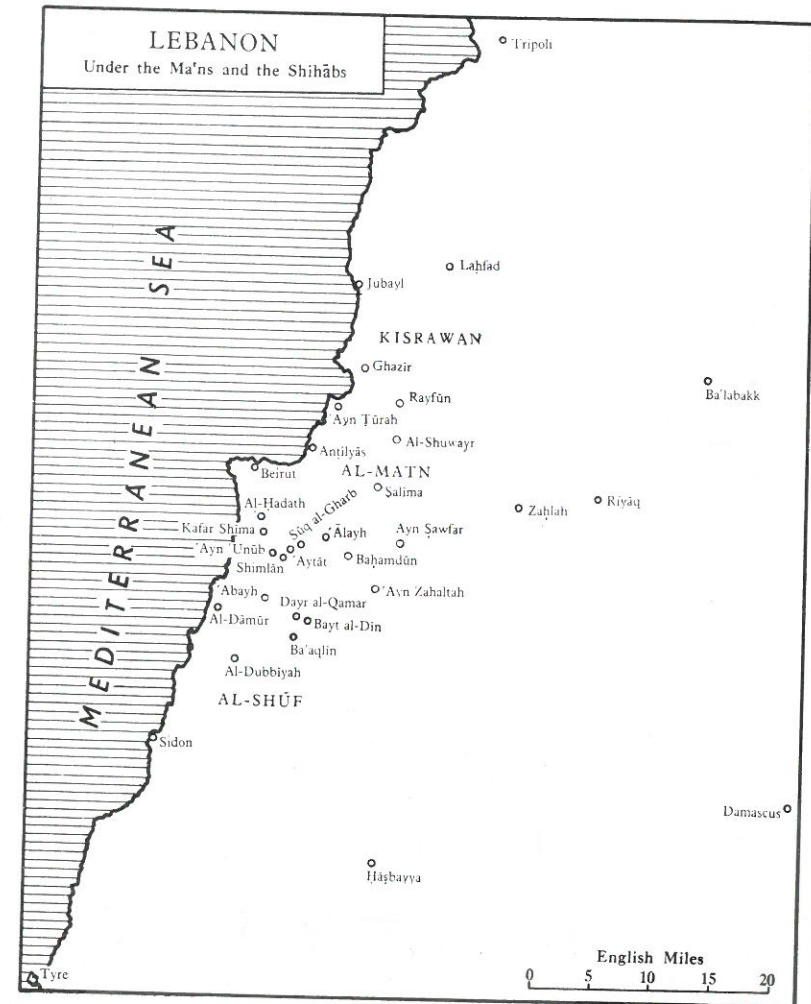
Today most Protestants are either teachers, accountants, or clerks of a variety of levels. This is due to the approach of the missionaries in their relation to the new converts. After conversion education and subsequent employment followed in the schools which the missionaries had founded. However, there are a few Protestants in the medical, legal, judicial professions.

In both Lebanon and Syria there is a strong tie between the individual and his place of birth. Although he may be working in a different city or town from that of his birth, the birthplace remains the centre in which the extended family gathers, and in which meaningful personal relations are developed and maintained. The birthplace is where the individual votes and exercises his civil responsibilities. It is possible for the individual to transfer his records, from his home-town to the place of his residence, but few actually do that.

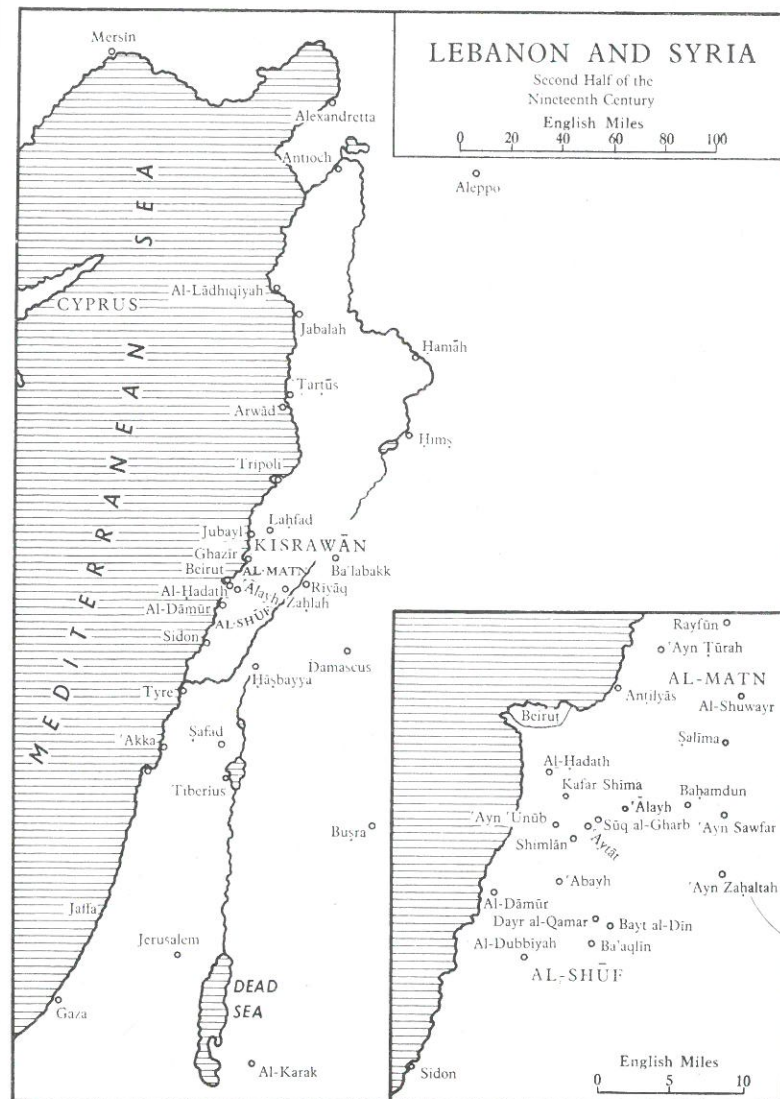
Inasmuch as the Protestants are originally from the various mountain villages, they evince the strong characteristics of the villager—loyalty to family, church, and village. In these institutions the individual finds meaning, support, and belonging. Within such a demographic context one can see the significance of the tie to the family and to the land; of relatedness through the extended family in spite of the nuclearisation which modernization and development have occasioned. The village as a symbol of relatedness plays a particularly important role in the shaping of the life patterns and styles of such people.

Loyalty to family, church, and village offers the possibility of going beyond the immediate concerns of the nuclearised family and encompassing the concerns, the attitudes, life-styles, hopes and aspirations of the whole. The concerns of the extended family are appropriated and become the concerns of the nuclear family.

The maps which follow indicate the initial locations where the missionaries worked; most of them are mountain villages. The only exceptions are Beirut, Sidon, and Tripoli.



Mount Lebanon of the Ma'ni and Shihabi eras is shown in this map. This era extended from 1544-1840's. The cities and villages which are underlined indicate the places where missionaries worked. Those marked with an asterisk were cities of more than 5000 population; all others were mountain villages with smaller populations. (Source: Philip K. Hitti's *Lebanon in History*)



The second half of the nineteenth century saw the creation of *Mutasarrifiyat Jabal Lubnan*, a quasi-independent state within the Ottoman Empire. This came into being as a result of the massacre of the Christians by the Druzes in 1860 and the subsequent intervention of the European powers. (Source: Philip K. Hitti's *Lebanon in History*)

Appendix II

The proposed organisation of the United Evangelical Church in the Arab East

The major Arabic speaking Evangelical Churches in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan are involved in consultations leading toward church union. For nearly a decade now they have sought ways and means of uniting with each other.

Two major religious factors underlie the desire for church union. First, all Evangelicals in the area share a common heritage, the Eastern Church tradition. And, second, they share a Reformed heritage as a result of the work of Protestant missionaries from America and Europe since the early part of the nineteenth century. There are also two major political factors which motivate all of them to seek union. In this sphere of relations, the first factor is the manner in which all religious bodies relate to the governments; the *millet* system is still the norm. And since the Evangelical churches are now fragmented, their political pull is rather minimal. The second political factor is in the area of ecumenical relations: dialogue with the Eastern churches as well as with the world-wide church is hampered by the fragmentation of the Evangelicals.

The status of the consultation is now stalemated by the question of the form of government which the uniting churches will adopt. The proposed constitution offers a high-church episcopal form of government. The order of ministry, as proposed, is as follows: bishop (*usqof*, i.e. episcopus), minister (*qassis*, i.e. priest), and

deacon (*shammas*). The word *qassis*, though used by all the Protestant Churches, is taken from Syriac and means priest of a low rank.

This was not acceptable to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (Presbyterian), and, therefore, the consultation was postponed. The other churches which form the consultation are the following: the Evangelical Episcopal Church in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria; the National Evangelical Church in Beirut; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan; and the National Evangelical Church in Damascus.

In this appendix I shall translate from the Arabic text the Preamble and Part III of the 1972 Proposed Constitution of the united Evangelical Church in the Arab East. I am omitting Part I which deals with the proposed name of the uniting church, and Part II which treats questions of faith, sacraments, worship, and mission of the church. I have also omitted the last section of Part III which offers details of the organisation of parishes, dioceses, Synod functions, and church courts.

Proposed Constitution

Preamble

Whereas the following Churches: the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon; the Evangelical Episcopal Church in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria; the National Evangelical Church in Beirut; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan; and the National Evangelical Church in Damascus desire to unite to form one church in the Arab world, they have entrusted their representatives to draw up a basis for the United Church's constitution which presents the following facts:

1 – The uniting churches insist that the purpose of this union is for the realisation of the will of God which the Lord Jesus expressed in his intercessory prayer that all may be one, and the uniting churches believe that by means of this union and in obedience to the

will of God these churches will become a more influential and effective church in the performance of the work of God; and this union shall lead to a more encompassing peace, a firmer fellowship and communion, and a fuller life within the United Church to the end that it will become a good haven for life in the Arab world. Through this union greater avenues for the power of God shall be opened to fulfil his purposes.

2 – The uniting churches confess with thanks-giving and gratitude that their being is a result of the missionary work of churches outside these lands. And they pray that through this union the work of evangelism and proclamation shall be strengthened.

3 – The uniting churches are indebted to the mother churches for their comprehensive inheritance in the whole church and which by their nature as reformed churches are characterised by the seal of reform. The elements of reform in this precious inheritance shall find their proper place in the life and teachings of the United Church.

4 – The United Church affirms that the reality of God declared in his eternal Son does not change. And that even though man's expressions are not perfect there are in existence structures which the catholic church has accepted. Regional churches have no right to change or reject this claim.

5 – The United Church approves all efforts to gather together the divided members of the Church of Christ in one organisation. The final purpose being the unity of this church with the world-wide church which confesses the name of Christ. The United Church desires to organise its work in such a way that preserves communion with all the branches of the Church of Christ, and continues to seek the strengthening of this communion and works for the goal of complete unity in one body for all the parts of the Church of Christ. Therefore, it welcomes evangelical and non-evangelical churches into the membership of the United Church.

6 – The United Church believes that the unity of the Church for which Christ prayed is a unity in him, and in God the Father through the Holy Spirit. It shall seek to realise a unity in the bond of

peace. And that is why it has its being in the spiritual Kingdom. This unity of the spirit must express itself in the faith, order, worship, administration, and its whole life. It is always united with the Spirit of Christ who gives it life. The United Church warns the uniting communities not to allow the hierarchial organisation to make the life and work of the church rigid, but they must remember always that the real purpose for which this organisation was formed, namely, to make the life of the church deeper and richer, and its work more effective so long as wisdom is given to its different members to work for the general good.

7— The United Church prays that this constitution with which it shall begin its life will not be used as a hindrance in the way of a richer life, and a more perfect truth which can be attained through a wider communion. But that the church must always be ready to correct its affairs in the light of the will of God and reach a better knowledge through the growth of the branches in one common body and spirit. Furthermore, the United Church must always be ready to reform itself in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Bible as the Holy Spirit directs it. Any change must proceed in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and in harmony with the content of faith and order.

Administration and order

I Membership

1— Man was created to glorify God, serve him, and enjoy him forever. To accomplish this purpose God worked in Christ to save man and lead him in the freedom and the glory of the children of God. Each member in the Church must know through faith that he is a son of God and rejoice in the salvation worked out for him.

Since man is saved by faith, it is his duty to realise his salvation through public and private prayers, the study of the scriptures, participation in public worship, hearing the word of God, partaking of holy communion, and by working with all his heart for a life to

which God will lead him. He must serve the church, dedicate his time to pastoral work in the church, show a Christian character in all his relations with his brothers, and help the needy and the sick.

2— The United Church accepts into its membership the following:

- Those who have been baptised in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Those who have confessed their faith and were accepted as communicant members in the church.
- Those who accept and submit to the rule of the constitution of this Church.
- Those who are not members in any other Church.
- Those who are not under church disciplinary action.
- The church is responsible for those who have been suspended from church membership as well as those from whom the privileges of membership have been taken away in a disciplinary action. The church exercises its responsibility toward those and seeks to bring them back into its fellowship.

3— Orders of funeral services now in use in any of the uniting churches may be used in these churches.

4— The affairs of the church shall be the responsibility of adults, i.e. those who have reached the age of 18.

II The Organisation of the Church

1— The organisation of the United Church is based on geographic units; each unit is a diocese which shall be administered by a diocesan council whose head shall be the bishop of that region.

2— The united Church operates as a whole through the Synod in which all the dioceses are represented.

3— Each diocese is composed of a small number of pastoral fields each of which will be under the governance of a session whose head shall be the minister. Pastoral fields are organised in accordance with the rules of order specified by the Synod.

III The bishops

A. *The functions and responsibilities of the bishops:*

1 – Pastoral supervision: to the bishop of each diocese belongs the right of general pastoral supervision for the evangelical work in his diocese.

2 – Leadership in evangelism: the bishop must lead the people in the evangelistic work in the diocese. He must promote this by his own personal good example and by the encouragement which he gives to others. To fulfil this purpose he must remind the ministers and the people of their responsibilities.

3 – Teaching: the office of bishop is also one of teaching; he must do everything he can to help the people and the ministers to always look to God by directing them to the truths of the Christian faith. It is the duty of the bishop of the diocese and the bishops in general to interpret the doctrines of the catholic church as the United Church understands them and to apply them to the problems of the times. The bishops can issue general proclamations after consultations with the theological committee of the church. These proclamations shall have the power of law in the church after the Synod approves them.

4 – Worship: each bishop shall familiarise himself with the ways of worship and the forms of divine liturgy used in his diocese. And after consultations with the bishops of the other dioceses and in accordance with the constitutional teachings regarding worship, he should offer counsel to the ministers and the people; he should be ready to offer services which the situation might dictate. He must seek to lead the diocese in the ways of worship which the synod shall have decided on for public use for the growth of the United Church in spirit and in worship. And when a serious controversy arises around any kind of public worship, the bishop has the right to forbid its continuance until a decision is reached by the executive committee of the Synod.

5 – Ordination: the bishop shall accept candidates for ordination to the ministry and he shall ordain them in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

6 – Committees of the Diocese: the bishop is the head of the diocesan council and the executive committee. He has the right to participate in any of the meetings of any committee or council in his diocese.

7 – Finance: the bishop shall not have the right in his capacity as bishop or head of the diocesan council to have authority over the finances of the diocese except in specially designated situations.

10 * – The Synod: each bishop by virtue of his office is a member of the Synod of the United Church.

11 – Period of appointment: a bishop of a diocese remains the bishop of his diocese until he resigns, accepts the administration of another diocese, leaves the diocese permanently, is defrocked by a court of the Synod, or when the executive committee declares him incapable mentally or physically to shoulder the burdens of his office or when he reaches the age of retirement. Bishops shall retire at the age of 65 unless the Synod extends the age limit.

12 – Compulsory retirement: when the presiding bishop, after consultations with the diocesan council determines that the bishop is no longer capable mentally or physically to fulfil his duties, he shall contact the said bishop to submit his resignation. If the said bishop refuses to resign, his case shall be brought to the executive committee of the Synod, and if the bishop in question is the presiding bishop, the vice president of the Synod shall contact him. The executive committee has the right to appoint a special investigation committee; and if that committee determines that the bishop is unable to fulfil his duties, it shall recommend the same to the synod which shall make the final decision regarding that bishop.

13 – Deputies: the bishop of a diocese shall have the right to appoint an assistant bishop or any other person with the due qualifications to be his deputy in his absence or to give him special responsibilities. A permanent deputy must have the approval of the diocesan council. A diocesan bishop has no right to appoint a

* I have followed the sequence of numbering in the original manuscript. I do not believe there are any missing articles.

deputy who will represent him in the Synod or any committee or give him the authority to ordain or confirm unless the one deputed is a bishop himself. And if any of the bishops should die suddenly, or if he is removed from his position, the presiding bishop shall appoint in his place a bishop to carry on the work.

B. The election, appointment, and the consecration of bishops:

1— The diocesan council has the right by a majority of its votes to nominate one or more persons for the office of bishop, from within or from outside the diocese.

2— The executive committee of the Synod has the right by a majority of its votes to nominate no more than three persons provided that such be from outside the diocese.

3— From the composite slate of nominees, in the above two paragraphs, the diocesan council shall elect two persons or at most four provided that each of them must receive two thirds majority vote of the diocesan council.

4— The Synod shall appoint a committee of six from outside the concerned diocese, to whom shall be added the president of the Synod, which shall elect a bishop for the diocese from among the names presented by the diocesan council in accordance with paragraph 3 above. The result shall be presented to the Synod for approval.

5— If the diocesan council does not within six months from the time the see is declared vacant, present nominees for bishop who have received a two thirds majority vote of the diocesan council, the executive committee of the Synod shall be responsible for appointing a new bishop for the diocese.

6— Transitory article: the first Synod shall when it convenes to approve this Constitution and to found the United Church elect the first bishops of all the dioceses: the same Synod shall have the right to elect assistant bishops to any of the dioceses if that is deemed necessary or suitable. These elections shall be on the basis of a simple majority of the votes of the first Synod.

7— The consecration of the bishop shall be in accordance with a special service unless the United Church shall have amended this requirement. Any amendment, however, must include the following:

- (a) Presentation of the bishop-elect to the presiding bishop in the presence of two other bishops of the United Church or any other episcopal church.
- (b) A prayer of consecration in which God is asked to pour of his Holy Spirit on the work of bishop in this church.
- (c) The laying on of hands by three bishops accompanied by special readings. The consecration of a bishop shall take place within the context of a communion service.

8— No person shall be consecrated bishop unless he is a minister in the United Church and has reached the age of thirty. But if the person concerned is an already recognised bishop, he shall be accepted in a service in which the presiding bishop shall lay his hand on him and say: 'As long as you have been consecrated bishop, and have received this order in the church of God, and you have been chosen to be bishop in the United Church, we in behalf of the United Church, recognise you as a bishop of the United Church and grant you the authority of the complete ministry in this church. May the Holy Spirit be with you, light your ways, and grant you strength, and wisdom all the days of your life in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'

IV The ministers and deacons

A. The office of minister:

The duty of the minister is to preach the word of God to the congregation in his care; to build them up in the holy faith; to seek to bring sinners to repentance; to fulfil the ministry of reconciliation by declaring God's forgiveness to the penitent; and to grant the blessing of God in the name of the Church. He shall administer holy communion and the other services of the church; teach and baptise; nurture the youth in the principles of their religion and prepare

them for confirmation of church membership. He is to shepherd his parish; visit the members of his church, particularly the sick and the wayward. He is to teach; rebuke and encourage; and preserve faithfully the faith and order of the church which he serves. He shall utilise every opportunity to preach the gospel, and bring people to the obedience of faith. He shall encourage and give opportunity to the members of the church to practice their various ministries. He shall not spare any effort to spread the good and eradicate evil in society. Furthermore, he shall, in addition to the realisation of these goals, be diligent in his studies and personal prayers.

B. The ordination of ministers:

1—Persons who offer themselves to the ministry and who feel the call of God will be ordained ministers in the United Church; they should have been recognised by the Church as being desirous to fulfil their call through the gifts given to them and through specialised training.

2—The principles which must be taken into account in all these situations is that the selection, the training, and the ordination must be the responsibility of the Church as a whole.

3—Each candidate must, in accordance with the articles of the Constitution and the general principles agreed upon by the Synod, accept the required training demanded of him as set forth by the bishop of the diocese in which he shall work. The bishop shall present the name of the candidate to a special council for the ordination of ministers in the United Church. The said bishop shall also submit a report about the candidate to the same council which has the right to accept or reject the candidate.

4—The Synod shall elect this council; it shall be composed of a bishop and a number of ministers and laymen equal in number; the bishop shall head the council. the council must have at least three ministers and three laymen. This council acts in behalf of the whole Church in accepting candidates for training and recommendation for ordination. Each candidate must have a recommendation from a church session and the Synod shall arrange for the training and the

examination of all candidates. The Synod shall also inform each diocesan council about those who are in training.

5—No one shall be ordained minister before he reaches the age of twenty-four and he must have been ordained deacon prior to that or made a licensed preacher and have practised ministry for at least two years.

C. The ordination of deacons or licensed preachers and the assignment of their duties:

The offices of deacon and licensed preacher in the United Church include the following:

1—Assisting the minister in the celebration of holy communion and the other holy services in the church.

2—Administer the sacrament of baptism in the absence of the minister. Deacons and licensed preachers are also to help the poor, the sick, and the needy; teach children the principles of the faith; preach the word; and assist in evangelistic and pastoral responsibilities.

3—Deacons may be those who desire this calling for life or those who have been chosen as candidates for the ministry.

D. The Ordinal:

1—A prayer to God to grant to those who present themselves for ordination the gifts of the Holy Spirit to work as ministers in his church.

2—The laying on of hands by the bishop and ministers during a service of holy communion. The same applies to the ordination of deacons and licensed preachers.

3—Anyone desiring to be ordained in any diocese in the United Church must declare his faith in the truths found in the Nicene Creed and must accept the doctrines which are affirmed in the article 'Faith and Order of the Church.'

4 – Anyone who is ordained minister or deacon must declare his acceptance of the Constitution of the Church and its rules of order before the bishop of the diocese allows him to practise his office.

V. The ministry of the laity

1 – The ministry of the laity is parallel to that of the ordained ministers, and the United Church welcomes the ministry of the laity – both men and women – and utilisation of the gifts which God had given them.

2 – The United Church shall encourage the laity to offer their gifts to the church through stewardship, not only in ordinary matters, but as lay apostles who participate in the many areas of the church's evangelical activities.

3 – The functions which the laity can fulfil shall be either as volunteers or employees of the Church:

- (a) They shall serve on church sessions in order that they may assist the pastor in his pastoral responsibilities and services of worship.
- (b) They shall serve in the work of the disciplinary courts of the Church.

4 – The Synod shall set forth the ways which are suitable in which the ministry of the laity shall be exercised to facilitate the work of the Church.

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